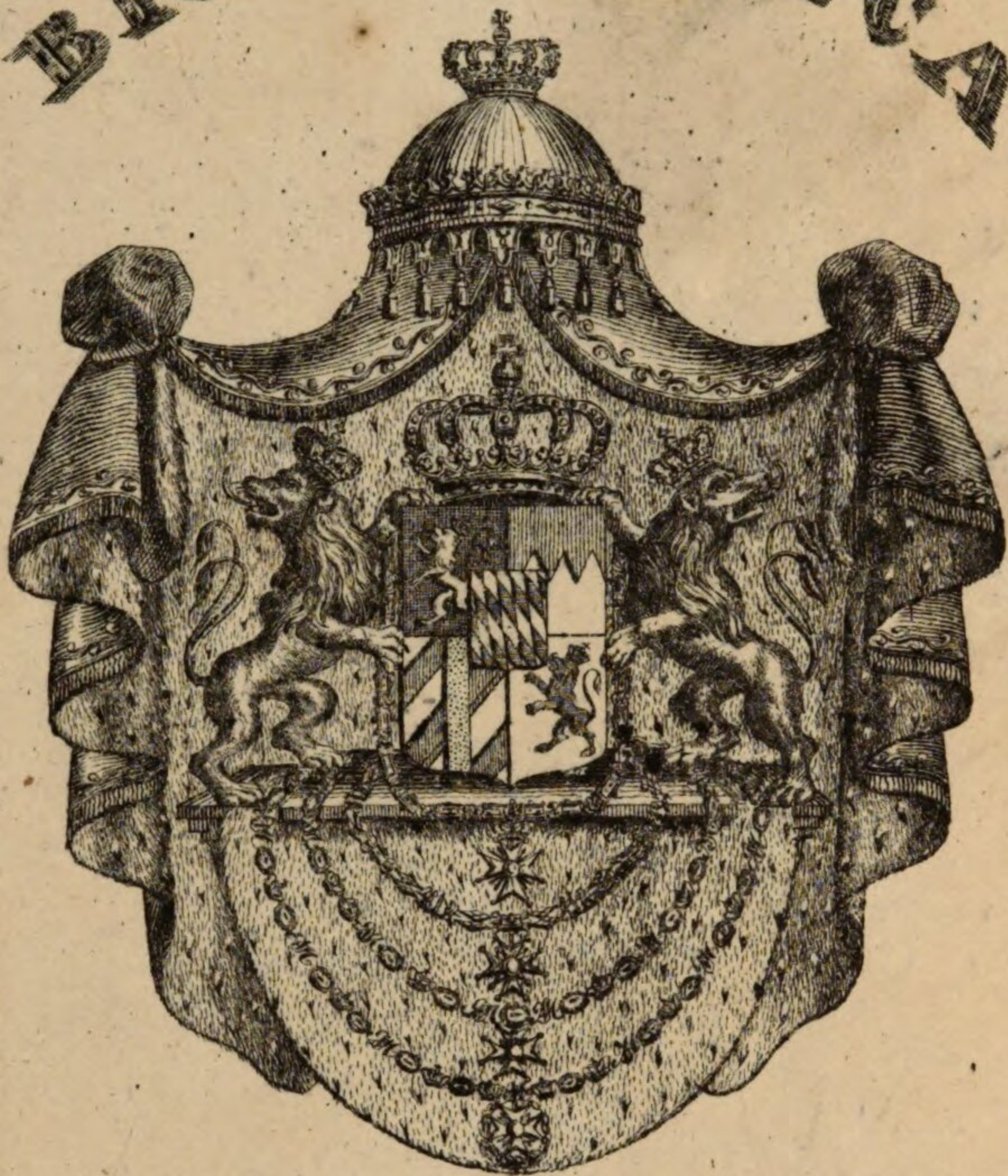


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THE
SPEECHES
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM PITT,
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

QUANTO MAGIS ADMIRAREMINI, SI AUDISSETIS IPSUM!

CICERO.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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MR. PITT'S

PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES.

December 8, 1796.

THE report of the committee of Ways and Means was brought up, and the resolutions were read a first time. On the motion for their being now read a second time,

Mr. Fox, in very animated language, urged the attention of the house to the circumstance of ministers having granted £1,200,000. to the Emperor of Germany without the consent of parliament, upon which he dwelt for a considerable time.

Mr. PITT replied to his observations:

Those, who never before had an opportunity of hearing the speeches which the right honourable gentleman has been accustomed to pronounce, and of observing the line of argument which he has been accustomed to employ upon every public question which has been agitated in this house, would certainly have supposed, upon the present occasion, that this day, for the first time in his life, the right honourable gentleman had felt real alarm for the liberties and constitution of his country, and for the first time a point had occurred, so intimately connected with the preservation of their political rights, that in the event of a decision hostile to the opinion which he holds, it is to be vindicated by nothing less than an appeal to the people. But it has happened to those who have often had occasion to attend to the right honourable gentleman, to have heard the same danger represented, and the same consequences applied. It is not once, twice, or three times that the right honourable gentleman has reprobated with the same emphasis, stigmatised with the same epithets, and denounced as pregnant with ruin to the liberties of

the country, measures, which it has been thought necessary to bring forward, and which the wisdom of parliament has thought proper to adopt; nor is it now the first time that the right honourable gentleman, and those who sit near him, have made a stand behind the last dike of the constitution. It is not the first, the second, nor the third time, I repeat, that upon points which a great majority of the house and of the country deemed to be connected with the preservation of their dearest interests, the right honourable gentleman has raised the cry of alarm, and has affected to see the downfall of the constitution, and the destruction of our liberties. Not many months even have elapsed since the right honourable gentleman stated with the same confidence, and urged with the same fervour, that the liberties of England were annihilated, and its constitution gone, if certain bills then pending passed into law; laws under which, I will venture to affirm, that a vast majority of the people of this country agree that the substantial blessings of their free government have been preserved, and the designs of our real enemies have hitherto been frustrated. Nay, not many hours have elapsed since the right honourable gentleman gave a two month's notice of his intention to move the repeal of those acts which he once represented as a grievance under which he could not sleep.

There is, indeed, something striking, something peculiarly singular, in the manner in which the new constitutional light has broken in upon the right honourable gentleman. This declaration of mind, which has infused so deadly an alarm into the mind of the right honourable gentleman, this declaration by which the constitution is annihilated, was made yesterday! This declaration is admitted to have been made in a way the most clear and distinct, indeed so clear as to magnify the danger, and to aggravate the offence. This declaration, which he now feels to be so fatal to the liberties of the country, so repugnant to the principles of the constitution, as to render it incumbent upon him to make it the ground of an extraordinary proceeding, and the reason of signal animadversion against me, did not yesterday strike him as of so much importance as immediately to call him

p ! It did not inspire with any particular sensation his honourable friend near him*, a gentleman by nature not free from jealousy, and of a vigilance which it was not easy to elude—it had not drawn from him the smallest remark of any kind, that could expose the danger with which it was pregnant. It never disturbed the serenity of his temper, though perhaps not the least liable to irritation, nor had it prevented him from laying before the house the details of his various calculations with the most calm and placid equanimity, the very moment after he had witnessed the death-wound of the constitution ! After an interval of debate, it had deranged none of the calculations of the right honourable gentleman, it had not driven out of his head his reasonings of the three per cents, his remarks upon the navy debt, nor a single circumstance of objection which the survey of the subject had presented, nor had it deterred him from allowing the resolutions to be carried with an unanimous vote. But after the right honourable gentleman had slept upon this subject, he discovers that the speech which he yesterday heard with so much indifference, contains principles of such dreadful tendency, and threatens consequences of such fatal operation, as to lead him not merely to propose a censure of the doctrines, or the reprobation of the particular measure ; not merely the punishment of the person by whom it was uttered ; but which would induce him in the first instance to take revenge for the error or the guilt of a minister, by giving his negative to the whole resolutions, which have no relation to the particular measure in question ; which would prompt him to suspend those supplies which are calculated to give confidence to the negotiations for peace, or in case of being reduced to that alternative, energy to the operations of war ; that would induce him to tell the enemy by the very next post, by which the unanimous determination of parliament to provide for every situation is conveyed, that the house of commons had interfered to stop the effect of their former decision, had suspended the means that were to add weight

* Mr. Grey.

to the exertions of the executive government, and at so critical a moment of the negociation had committed the interests of this country and her allies, and flattered the hopes and raised the pretensions of the enemy. Such is the length to which the proposition of the right honourable gentleman goes. It is not to remedy the imputed crime which has been committed, nor to guard against the chance of its occurring in future, but it is calculated to derange every measure which may be in train, and to disappoint every design that may be in contemplation. I cannot, however, but hope, that when the right honourable gentleman has viewed the subject with more consideration, when he has again slept upon his wrath, he will recur to that coolness which he first experienced, and that his vehemence and his alarm will subside. But whether the right honourable gentleman is to be deterred by the prospect of the dangers which must arise from the measure which he proposes, at least I cannot doubt that consideration will have its just weight with the house.

The right honourable gentleman says, that if he succeeds in his present motion, he will move the house against his Majesty's ministers for the part they have acted upon this occasion. There is one thing that I will intreat of the right honourable gentleman, and he may be assured it is the only supplication that I will address to him upon this subject, and it is, that if he can prove to the house that I have violated the constitution, and committed the crime of which he accuses me, he will not defer a single moment to take the step which he has threatened; that he will confine his efforts to that object, and that he will not combine with the vengeance he pursues, a measure that involves the ruin of his country. Let the punishment destined for ministers light upon them alone, and let the consequences of the measures which they employed to avert the dangers which threatened their country, the measures which they adopted for its safety, for the salvation of Europe, rest upon themselves. This much I address to the right honourable gentleman, not for personal considerations, nor do I intreat the boon as a matter of personal indulgence. If it be refused by him, I hope at least

that the house will be actuated by more moderate feelings, and guided by wiser maxims.

The rest of the right honourable gentleman's propositions, and the point of his observations, are so exclusively confined to myself, that I am at a loss in what way to proceed, or whether I ought to trespass upon the house with any remarks upon them, since the subject is intended for a more full discussion. I cannot, however, refrain from exposing the strange and extraordinary misrepresentations which he has given of the general question upon which he builds the conclusion of criminality; and I cannot doubt, that when the house perceives the foundation upon which the accusation is raised, they will be able to judge of the effect that ought to be given to the others with which it was vested in the house of commons. The right honourable gentleman stated the general principle which constituted the chief security of our liberties—the power of controlling the public expenditure—and I hope there is little difference of opinion upon this subject. The right honourable gentleman says, that if there is one thing sure in the constitution, it is this; and if it be violated, he maintains that the people still possess the means of obtaining redress. After the representations which the house have heard upon the dilapidations which the constitution has suffered, and the invasions committed upon the public liberties, they may judge of the reality of the danger which is now threatened, when it is even yet admitted that resources are left by which it may be opposed. Although the general principle which the right honourable gentleman states as the essence of the freedom of the constitution be admitted, it cannot be disputed that it is subject to limitation. At every period since the commencement of those periods to which we refer for the pure practice of the constitution, in the best and most glorious æras in the history of our government, the principle of extraordinaries has been received, not merely for individual expenses, but recognized upon general views. It has prevailed under every administration, even those with which the right honourable gentleman was connected, during the three last reigns, and in

the most approved periods of liberty and constitutional policy. The right honourable gentleman then holds this principle without exception, while the practice of every government proves that it has been always limited, and his whole argument is applicable to all the extraordinaries that ever were voted by parliament. It is impossible, therefore, that the right honourable gentleman could have correctly stated—I can hardly believe that he has sincerely stated—this argument, which his experience must disavow, and his knowledge must inform him is neither consistent with the principles of the constitution, nor with its practice at periods which deserve to be followed as examples.

But though I am here arguing upon general points, the question in reality comes within a narrower compass. The right honourable gentleman chuses to overlook in one instance what he alludes to in another part of his speech. Did it never occur to him that parliament had sometimes committed to his Majesty, not new, but special powers, which superseded all general questions? In reality this discretionary power is expressly committed to his Majesty. Before I sit down, I intend to move that his Majesty's message of the 8th of December last year should be read, and likewise the act, granting a vote of credit. From this it will appear that a power was given to his Majesty to apply the sum contained in the vote of credit as the exigencies of the state might require. Suppose the case, which will not be a less suitable illustration, because it approaches the fact, that powers had been conferred to give that assistance to the allies of this country, which our own interest and the circumstances of the situation required; can any man doubt that the minister, who should have hesitated to issue that sum, which, granted, might have enabled our allies to maintain their own cause, and to defend the safety of Europe, and who should have allowed the enemies of Austria to complete her destruction by withholding a seasonable supply, would have been a traitor to his country, and would have merited the severest punishment? The vote of credit last year does actually invest the executive government with a discretionary power of applying the sums granted

in a manner that might best suit the public exigencies, and the money applied to the service of the emperor is within the amount of the grant. I do not mean to say that the discretion thus vested in the crown is absolute and independent of the control of parliament, or that the minister, who exercises it in an improper manner, is exempted from censure; but in what manner I understand this limitation, I will state when I am called upon to make my defence. Whatever be the issue of this discussion, I cannot forbear observing, even at the risk of incurring the imputation of arrogance, that I would rather be convicted of having acted a principal part in the measure of granting a supply by which the salvation of Austria was secured, and the independence of Europe was maintained, than be acquitted for withholding that aid, by which the cause of our allies was sacrificed, and the general interests of mankind compromised. At present, however, the question is not, Whether the conduct of his Majesty's ministers were proper or improper; whether they were intitled to praise or deserving of punishment? The house have now to determine, Whether they shall announce to France that the supplies of the year are to be stopped, and the exertions of the executive power suspended? Whether at a moment of such critical importance we are to be reduced to the unhappy situation when we can neither prosecute the negociation with that confidence which is calculated to insure a favorable issue, nor prepare for war with an energy which can afford the prospect of success to our exertions?

The house divided on the question, that the word "now" stand part of the motion,

Ayes - - - - - 164

Noes - - - - - 58

The original question was then put, and carried,

December 14, 1796.

Mr. Fox, after an introductory speech, condemning, as unconstitutional, the conduct of ministers in having granted money to the Emperor of Germany and the Prince of Condé, without the consent of Parliament, moved the following resolution: "That his Majesty's ministers, having authorised and directed, at different times, without the consent, and during the sitting of Parliament, the issue of various sums of money for the service of his Imperial Majesty, and also for the service of the army under the Prince of Condé, have acted contrary to their duty, and to the trust reposed in them, and have thereby violated the constitutional privileges of this House."

Mr. PITT then rose:

When I consider, Sir, the nature of the motion which is this day brought forward by the right honourable gentleman against his Majesty's ministers, and the serious charge which it involves, I must regard myself as particularly implicated in that charge, as possessing a particular share of responsibility in the conduct of that measure which is censured as a violation of the constitution, and a breach of the privileges of this house. I have, however, in the discussion of this question every thing to expect from the candour and justice of the house. An imputation of a most serious kind has been advanced against his Majesty's ministers; but it is necessary that all which may be offered on both sides should be fairly heard, before any decision can take place. It is requisite that gentlemen should be in full possession of every important fact that can be adduced, before they hasten to a conclusion which necessarily involves in it matter of such weight and magnitude. The house should clearly know the general principles on which it is to decide: it should know the grounds on which the theory of this part of the constitution is erected: it should also know, what the particular instances are in point of practice that militate in a certain degree against the general principles. I say, Sir, when these considerations are once known, it will then be incumbent on the house to decide. But I trust it will not be denied, that until these points

*all this stuff is nonsense
it is not a violation of the
constitution but a breach of
the trust reposed in them
and it is not a violation of
the constitution but a breach
of the trust reposed in them
and it is not a violation of
the constitution but a breach
of the trust reposed in them*

are completely and satisfactorily ascertained, the house ought, with every view to propriety, to suspend its determination. It is no small object of satisfaction to me, that the full review of former precedents with respect to the present motion, forms a chief ground of it. In such an application of facts, I have considerable reason to be pleased, and I trust I shall clearly demonstrate before I sit down, that former precedents concur in justifying the measure which is at this moment so severely condemned.

I am, however, not a little surprised to hear the language made use of by an honourable magistrate*, who has declared that he has received instructions from his constituents to join in a vote of censure against his Majesty's ministers, for having supplied the emperor with money without the authority of parliament. There is, perhaps, not any question on which a member ought to allow the decided dictates of his own conscience and judgment to be superseded by the instructions of his constituents; but if there is any case in which a member ought to be particularly anxious to preserve his right of private judgment, it is in the present instance, with respect to a criminal charge: for I think it must be admitted, that it was impossible for the honourable gentleman's constituents to decide in a just and candid manner, on the propriety of giving a vote on a motion, with the particulars of which they must have been unacquainted, and more peculiarly as they must have been totally ignorant of the defence which his Majesty's ministers meant to set up. I have, Sir, to caution the house against those constitutional doctrines which have been maintained in former debates, and particularly on Thursday night last. But without entering into a minute refutation of them, or stating those which I conceive to be strictly just, I cannot help observing, that much is saved for my purpose by the concessions which the right honourable gentleman himself† has made. I certainly do not wish to goad the right honourable gentleman into the former opinions he has at different times maintained: I am better content to take his present state-

* Alderman Combe.

† Mr. Fox.

With due deference, I should think that the proposed censure is a fault against the sense of Mr. Pitt, who there says, "the constitutional" in regard only to the object of the debate, and not in regard to the conformity of the measure to the constitution. — The sequel shows it is false.

ments: I am better content with what I have heard from him to-day, and with those general principles which have fallen from him in support of his motion. For as, on a former occasion, when the present subject was first started, the interval of one night made him see the measure more inflammatory than it really is; it now appears that a pause of a few days have diminished his ideas of the inflammatory tendency which, in his own opinion, it possessed. The right honourable gentleman has taken great pains to lay down the great constitutional principles with regard to pecuniary grants, and the use of these grants. I did understand on a former night, that the honourable gentleman told us one thing, to which he said there was no exception, namely, that no expense could be incurred without the consent of parliament. I did not altogether subscribe to that doctrine, and I will state, as nearly as possible, the very words of the argument I then used in answer. I argued, that the practice of extraordinaries had been adopted at different periods of the history of the country, at periods the most approved in the history of the country, at least at periods which the honourable gentleman must naturally think the most approved—when he was himself in the administration. Extraordinaries, to a large amount, were used during the sitting of parliament, and parliament afterwards justified the act by a vote. The honourable gentleman did then admit, that he never could be supposed to have said that extraordinaries could not be used without the consent of parliament, previously obtained; but when ministers have now adopted the same measure, the propriety of which the honourable gentleman said, he could not be supposed to deny, yet such is his alarm, that he cannot feel himself justified in pausing a moment on the necessity of the actual condemnation of ministers.

However, Sir, it is enough for my purpose to admit, that, according to the fundamental principles of the constitution, all grants must proceed from the commons; that they are afterwards subject to their control, is a principle undeniable: but although the commons are possessed of the power of controlling the application of the supplies raised by them, yet it is a circumstance

proved to demonstration, by practice and general observation, that it would be impossible to carry on any wars, that it would be impossible for government to proceed with due regard for the public safety, or with advantage for the public service, if extraordinaries were not raised by parliament. In point of practice, it is evident they have been raised. Those great writers, who have written on the subject subsequent to the revolution, prove that extraordinaries have always been used from that period. I desire to refer to the practice of the whole of the succession of administrations, from the days of King William down to the present time, when the principles of the constitution are become infinitely more definite, and when, owing to ambition on the part of France, public expenses and the transactions of finance have attained a greater magnitude; and I ask, whether from that period down to the present, the practice of extraordinaries has not been recognized, and admitted? I do not mean of extraordinaries only, but of extraordinary services during the sitting of parliament. I do not state this, as if there was only one or two solitary precedents, but as the uniform practice of all the wars in which this country has been engaged; and that, during such wars, the extraordinaries have been precisely of the description I have stated. Sir, our constitution is one which rests on great and leading principles, but still no one would wish that the constitution should experience any injury by pushing those principles to a rigid and extreme excess. If we are to look into the record books of the constitution, we shall find certain principles laid down, which seem to contradict many acts of parliament, which are held as strictly legal. If we examine the law of parliament, we shall find, that it is derived principally from the general tenor of the whole of the principles of the constitution, illustrated by the particular urgency and necessity of circumstances. If this is the true way which men ought to study the constitution, by applying the principles of it to the exigency of circumstances, let me repeat what I stated on a former night, with respect to the impossibility of the measure being wrong, which was done in conformity to the best and most approved principles, as adapted to pe-

culiar events; and let me also ask, how a measure can deserve to be loaded with obloquy and reproach, which in truth is no more than has been the practice of every administration, at those periods when we have been most proud of the constitution? I might remark, that the honourable gentleman, in the course of his speech, has admitted such to have been the practice, because he has himself acted upon it; yet I must admit that the honourable gentleman, when he stated that such was the practice, observed, that because extraordinaries were consonant to practice, it was no reason they should be extended so far, if it could possibly be avoided. The honourable gentleman, if I understand him right, by that very mode of argument, of the extension of the extraordinaries being attended with so much the more mischief, does, in fact, admit the exception to the principle which he charges me with having violated, and, in short, destroys in effect the very principle he before admitted. He told us that every extraordinary service involved the breach of the pledge to satisfy former estimates, by removing the means of paying them to some other service. If his doctrines mean to infer that extraordinaries ought not to be unnecessarily extended, I cannot but perfectly coincide with him: but if his argument has for its object that of rendering all extraordinaries invidious, I hope, in such case I may be allowed to guard the house against the effects of attending too much to topics opposed to the very same principles which he has before admitted. That extraordinaries are liable to the future observation and control of parliament, is true; but parliament has at all times felt, that it is necessary, for the public safety, that ministers should have the power of using extraordinaries, without appealing to parliament, provided that power, and the means by which those extraordinaries are incurred, are subject to future discussion.

But it is not the question of extraordinaries only that arises. Parliament, finding the impossibility of reducing every thing to estimated expenses, has introduced the practice of giving votes of credit, with the power, generally, to apply them as exigencies might require. As far as it has been possible to provide against

extraordinaries, which always hitherto has been impracticable, every endeavour has been exerted; but it is a circumstance in which parliament have certainly acted with great wisdom, that it has not thought proper at any time to interfere with respect to the amount of the sums which ministers might think necessary for supplying the extraordinaries, but merely to make ministers responsible for the application of the sums, and the necessity of the extraordinaries, to the payment of which they are directed. Before I say any more, I will only observe, that it is not likely I should be one to dispute the propriety of the measure of providing for the extraordinaries by the extent of the vote of credit, if such a thing could be adopted; I have often heard it made a matter of reproach to me, that I endeavoured to estimate every expense and provide for it beforehand. The votes of credit were always smaller in former wars than in the present. In the present war, I have added to the vote of credit other provisions for the purpose of providing for the extraordinaries beforehand; I may therefore be considered as having done all in my power towards endeavouring to take the previous authority of parliament. What then do I say, that there is no difference between a vote of credit and extraordinaries? As to the vote of credit, I conceive it to be a privilege granted to his Majesty's ministers to employ a given sum to any such purpose as the exigency of affairs shall require. There is no circumstance, however unforeseen, there is no purpose, be it what it may, no possible event, to which ministers may not think it requisite that a vote of credit is applicable; no expenses upon sudden emergencies, which do not come within the spirit of a vote of credit, subject however to that principle which I shall state. [Here Mr. Grey took notes of what fell from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.] I observe an honourable gentleman taking notes of what I have just mentioned, and by his manner he seems to express disapprobation. I only hope he will not interrupt me, till he has done me the honour to attend to the whole of what I say, when I have no doubt but I shall be able to convince him I am right. Have I said that, because a vote of credit is applicable

to every public service, there is no question of responsibility? Have I said there is no principle of respect, of attention, of deference to parliament? I trust I have neither denied, nor at any one moment of my life have failed to shew by my conduct, that such responsibility does exist. I know that for every exercise of that discretion, regularly given by the act, founded upon the vote of credit, ministers are subject to the same responsibility as for the exercise of every other discretion, which permanently belongs to them as ministers of the crown, and which they are bound to use for the safety, the welfare, and the dignity of the country; a discretion the more important, as it relates to the disposition of the public money: and I trust parliament will not lose sight, that it is their duty to weigh those unforeseen difficulties on which alone government can use the powers with which it is entrusted.

But, Sir, I do not mean to stop here; I do not mean to say that government ought not to be questioned as to the propriety of the measures it may think proper to recur to. I have admitted its liability to be censured. I will admit, that if, at that time of using a vote of credit, ministers foresee any expenditure which appears likely to be of consequence, either with respect to its amount, or the importance or peculiarity of the subject, if it admits of a precise estimate, and if the subject is of such a nature that it can be divulged without injury or inconvenience to the public—should readily admit that that minister would fail in his duty to parliament, that he would not act according to the sound principles of what I believe to be the constitution of the country, if he were not to state the nature of the emergency, and endeavour to estimate the expense; but if from the nature of the exigency, it should be impolitic to divulge it, in that case, I conceive the minister justified, who conceals it from parliament till a future season. By these principles, as to the general question, I am satisfied that my merits or demerits should be tried; If I have, in the opinion of the house, departed from the principles of the constitution, then I have committed an error in judgment: If through an error in judgment I have

departed from the principles of the constitution, I admit that I ought to receive the censure of the house, notwithstanding that error proceeded from my having felt it my irresistible duty, in common with the rest of his Majesty's ministers, to act upon principles which I conceived the best calculated to ensure the prosperity and advantage of the country. Let me not be supposed to admit, what the honourable gentleman seems to assume as an instance of candour, namely, that he reserved the question, whether any degree of importance, which might attach to the subject, could possibly be considered an argument for concealing it, or that its importance could make any difference with regard to the estimate of its expense. Of the principle itself, it is not material to say more; but with respect to what the honourable gentleman has stated, I will make this observation. He has said that extraordinaries are admitted on account of indispensable necessity, and that those extraordinaries are such a mischief, that he almost doubts whether they should be suffered at all. I will admit that expense, be it what it will, is indubitably objectionable, and that if the expense arises to a considerable sum, the objection is still stronger; but the greater the expense, the higher is the advance on the responsibility of ministers, and the greater is the inducement for this house to vote to discharge those expenses. The only case has occurred which was in contemplation. If it should appear to the house, that, in consequence of an unforeseen change of circumstances, the necessity of expenditure was increased; if it should appear that the only opportunity had arrived, in which there was no alternative but that of relinquishing the cause in which the country was engaged, or of advancing the responsibility of ministers; if, I say, this should appear, is it a mark of candour in the honourable gentleman to desire that the urgency only should be put out of the question?

Why then, Sir, as to the utility of the advance to the emperor, whether it could have been made in a more proper form; whether, by a previous application to parliament, it would not have been attended with a greater degree of inconvenience;

whether the advance was not made at a time the most critical that could possibly have occurred—these are questions which I shall shortly proceed to discuss. But, assuming for the present, that there was a difficulty about the mode of doing it, what mode, under similar circumstances, would have been more eligible? In this way it has been tried, and has succeeded: by previously applying to parliament, it is doubtful whether it would have succeeded or not. I entreat gentlemen to recollect the situation of the emperor on the continent; the situation of this country, with respect to the prosecution of the war, or of its termination by a safe and honourable peace: I request them to look back to July or August last; a period when we saw with regret and apprehension the triumphant arms of the French Republic at the gates of Munich, and the territorial possessions of the belligerent powers in danger of being wrested from them. When they look back to this period, let them at the same time contemplate the slow, firm, measured and magnanimous retreat of the gallant Austrian army, and the consequences which followed from a retreat only calculated to ensure the success of their future operations. Will they then ask themselves, dry as the question may be, when so animated a subject is presented to the mind, how far the assurance of the aid which this country was disposed to grant, may have invigorated the spirit of a country making its utmost efforts to resist an invading foe, how far it may have given confidence to their resources, and enabled them to prosecute that line of operations which has been attended with such distinguished success? With these considerations in his view, is there any man who can regard as a matter of consequence, whether the expense of 900,000*l.* or 1,200,000*l.* has been incurred to the country? Is there any man who can question the propriety of the sum allotted for the object, and would be willing, for the sake of so paltry a saving, to give up our share in promoting a service, which has terminated so honourably for the character of our allies, and so beneficially for the general interests of Europe? Who would not rejoice that he was admitted into partnership so illustrious, and accompanied with such brilliant success?

— *Me credite Lesbion,
Me Tenedon, Chrysenque, & Cyllan Apollinis urbes,
Et Scyron cepisse. Meâ concussa putate
Procubuisse solo Lyrnessia mœnia dextrâ.*

We have besides to consider, that whatever in this instance has been given, has only been lent to a power whom we have no reason to distrust. Even if a sum had been given to a much larger amount, it would surely have been amply repaid by the success which has attended the exertions of our allies, and the important advantages which have been gained to the common cause. In the course of discussion on this subject, frequent mention has been made of the opinion of the public. The public are not so dead or so insensible as either to be ignorant of the advantages which have been obtained, or ungrateful towards those to whose gallant exertions they are indebted on the present occasion. There is not a man, even the meanest individual in the country, who will not feel himself more than repaid for the small quota which he will be required to bring forward in aid of the public service, by the important benefits which have been secured to the general interests of Europe. There is not, I will venture to say, an Englishman who does not feel the most ardent sympathy with the magnanimity, the resources, the spirit, and perseverance which have been displayed by Austria in her recent exertions, and who does not rejoice that the contributions of England have been brought forward in aid of operations which have been equally marked by their gallantry and success. I will not think so ill of the good sense of my countrymen, as to suppose that they can regret any trifling expense, which has been the means of obtaining such signal advantages. The question alone is, whether there is any doubt of the exigence of the measure, whether there is any doubt of its necessity, and whether the service would have been performed by a previous statement to parliament.

Here Sir, let me state to this house, or rather repeat what I have shortly stated on a former night. The house will recollect, that from the principles on which I conceive a government

should act, it never could have been in my contemplation, or that of his Majesty's ministers, under the vote of credit, to propose advancing the whole of the sum which turned out to be necessary for the emperor. That it was not my intention, is proved by this circumstance, that at the very period of proposing the vote of credit, a reserve was expressly made for a loan to be specifically brought forward, and submitted to parliament, to a much larger amount than the vote of credit. What inference do I wish to draw from this? First of all, that it is a pretty clear and evident proof, that it in reality appeared, by the Austrians being so much in want, that his Majesty's ministers had an impression of the necessity of assisting the emperor. Could they have any motive to hold out a loan, if there was no such thing in agitation? What view could any government have in stating the necessity of an Austrian loan, if they did not see the occasion for one? When we asked for the vote of credit, it was plain we were not asking for a vote of credit for services unforeseen, but that we intended to apply it as it has been applied. Gentlemen will recollect, that on the first loan of eighteen millions, it was stated as uncertain the precise time it would be called for; that the precise time depended on the result of an intercourse between his Majesty and the emperor, without which it was impossible to settle the extent of it. But it is true, I felt that, in consequence of the extraordinary extent of the drain of money, some time would be necessary before the influx of trade would be such as to render a measure of that kind practicable in its execution, or safe in its impression; for of all subjects, that which relates to credit, or the stagnation of money, the delicacy of which every man knows, is that in which it is necessary to be particularly circumspect. Now, how does this stand? I was sanguine that a much shorter interval would have diminished the scarcity. Afterwards, at a much later period, I found that it would be impossible to bring forward the loan. Under this impression, I did think it advisable to take the step I have taken, a short time previous to the end of last parliament. How far that can be fairly imputed to me as a crime, is a question I shall have

occasion to discuss. However, this is the first principle of my defence, that when the campaign was advancing, so that the emperor could not wait for any proof of the reality of his hopes of an increase of pecuniary supply, in conformity to what had been done before, and according to principles recognized by parliament, I thought it expedient, for the success of his arms, to send the means of repelling the enemy.

The principal question is, whether this measure has deprived you of any thing you possessed? whether any disadvantage has been the consequence of it, so as to make our situation more embarrassed now than it would have been some months ago, by a loan taking place? I believe the situation of mercantile men, and the pecuniary state of the country, is more favourable now than they were at the periods when the several remittances to the emperor were issued. This I state not merely on the suggestions of any particular member of this house, not merely in consequence of any discovered public opinion; but I state it on evident grounds of reason. Nor can I for a moment suppose that the members of this house, that the public will long suspend the delegation of their assent to a measure founded equally in the justice and expediency of the motives which gave it birth. But however this may be, I have on this occasion the satisfaction of knowing that I am not stating my own sentiments only, but also those of the persons who were the contractors for the last loan. The contractors for that loan themselves felt then, and have since communicated to me, the inconveniences that had resulted to commerce in general from the immense, but necessary drains in the money market. They had felt that any specific proposition to guarantee a fresh loan to the emperor would have sensibly affected the money market: would have depreciated the funds, and depressed the public credit. Had I upon that occasion adopted the mode of a public loan; had I come to parliament, when parliament first sat to deliberate on public measures; had I, while the necessities of the empire and the dearest interests of Europe depended in some measure, the one for relief, the other for preservation, on the remittance of certain portions

of that sum of 1,200,000*l.*; — had I in that eventful crisis done any thing that might, in its ultimate consequences, increase the difficulties of that ally, endanger and risk the liberties of Europe, what, let me ask, would have been the language of the honourable gentleman, who has this night censured my conduct, and made it the subject of a specific motion? I repeat it: The persons best acquainted with the money market were, at the periods I have mentioned, deeply impressed with a sense of its growing embarrassment, and seriously felt the inconveniencies necessarily concomitant to a state of warfare. They felt those inconveniencies, but they more than felt the justice of the contest which had operated as the cause of them. In their opinion, the pecuniary situation of the country was such as would have rendered the public avowal of any loan to the emperor extremely impolitic, and by an ill-timed discussion of its propriety, have produced those evils I have in part detailed. To them I submitted whether a public loan would be prudent in such circumstances, but they were unanimous in their preference of the adopted mode. A proof this, that I could have no intention to violate the constitution. That I had not hastily, and immaturally adopted the alternative; that I made those preliminary arrangements; that my enquiries on the subject were as general and earnest as I have this night avowed, is well known, not only to the individuals with whom I consulted, but also to my colleagues in the ministry. I appeal, without fear of being contradicted, I appeal to those in my confidence, whether such were or such were not my sentiments, whether such was or was not my conduct on that occasion? At this time the situation of the empire was also so peculiar, that his Majesty's servants could not but have a strong and influencing sense of the impropriety of affording publicly the aid that situation so much required. The arms of the French republic were victorious in almost every quarter, the empire threatened with destruction, and Europe with ruin. This was, I own, the reverse of our once favourable hopes: from the exertions of that ally our expectations had been different; but could any temporary reverse of circumstances justify a mea-

sure that must have entailed on that ally a permanent mischief? Surely we, who had considered ourselves entitled to share in the good fortune of the arms of Austria, would not justly have separated our interests in her adversity. Surely that ally, of whose good faith and candour, of whose steady attachment to the principles of the alliance we had so many and such splendid proofs; that ally, who had almost singly resisted the destructive progress of an impetuous and enthusiastic enemy; yes, the house of Austria eminently merited our confidence and our esteem. But these were not enough. The empire was in actual danger; her treasury exhausted; and many of her princes forced to abandon her defence. It was in this conjuncture that his Majesty's servants, faithful at least to their sense of the danger, afforded to Germany that assistance which I am proud to say had been in a great measure the means of saving not only that particular empire, but a vast portion of Europe. Actuated by these considerations, thus hurried by existing necessities, to adopt a particular measure, I flatter myself few who hear me will in the end fail to discover, that the act itself, even supposing it to be unconstitutional, could not be the result of a deliberate intention to violate acts of parliament.

The right honourable gentleman has supposed that the measure was now brought forward under cover of the glory of the Austrian successes; but I have to remind that honourable gentleman, and the house, that the resolution of his Majesty's ministers, to assist the emperor, was taken not under the flattering phantom of delusive glory, not because the house of Austria was resuming, under the auspices of one of its illustrious members, its former spirit, and had regained its ardour; not because the French had been forced to abandon some places, and retreat from others in the German dominions; but their resolution was taken when ministers felt that they had an opportunity of giving to the emperor, Europe and the country, the best pledge of their sincerity, of their attention to their interests, of their individual integrity, and collective force. The resolution was not taken without serious contemplation of the risk. It was not under-

taken without maturely considering every relation, in which it could possibly connect itself with the constitution. It was not undertaken in defiance of law, nor made a solitary exception to all former usage. It was not undertaken to cripple our finances, nor had it either prospectively, or retrospectively, any one thing in common with a deliberate insult to the house. But it was undertaken in a way, and upon an emergency, which warranted the measure. Even the measure was warranted by the former opinions of my adversaries; but especially by the then and present opinion of monied men. I shall perhaps be asked, what is the difference between a loan in the manner that loan was transacted, and a loan granted in the old and popular way? What the difference between a direct and avowed disbursement of the public money, and an indirect and concealed disbursement? The former I shall, perhaps, be told, must have decreased the pecuniary resources of the country equally with the latter; and have lessened, though in a secret manner, the general means of commercial security. But to this I cannot concede, because the reverse has been the fact. The fact has been, that by remitting money to the emperor in that season of difficulty, of doubt and danger, his Majesty's ministers have rendered less doubtful the prospects of a safe and honourable peace. Had ministers on that occasion, after being convinced themselves of the necessity and justice of such assistance, and during the recess of parliament, delayed the adoption of the conduct they have pursued, instead of affording to the emperor, the enemy, and Europe, a proof of superior wisdom, and superior resources, it would be a proof of the want of both, by giving the money publicly. By discussing the subject in parliament at the earliest period, if such a discussion could be entered into, not only public credit would have been injured, but you would have told the enemy that your difficulties obliged you to stint the acknowledged wants of your allies. To those who thought worse of our resources than I did, to the public mind in general, such a measure in such a crisis would, I know, have been a cause not of rejoicing, but of sorrow; not a source of pleasure, but of pain. Every man who

wished well to his country, every man sincerely attached to the principles of the constitution, instead of approving of that assistance being afforded originally as a loan, would have said, No, do not commit yourself to your ally, so as to make your necessities a test of his. If, instead of endeavouring to poise and remove the difficulty as I have done, this house had so passed a public loan, such must have been the consequence. I am certain that had parliament been acquainted with the danger of our ally, and had even determined to give the necessary assistance, the publicity of the measure would have defeated the object. So that whether we had or had not been reduced to the alternative of refusing assistance altogether, the event must have produced collateral mischiefs. I may therefore, I think, ask, Ought you to yield to the pressure of temporary difficulty, and abandon your ally at a moment when such a step may be decisive of his fate? Ought you, on the other hand, completely to pledge yourselves to grant a pecuniary assistance which, in the first instance, may be attended with considerable inconvenience, and the influence of which, on the future course of events, you are unable to ascertain? Pledges of aid, and of instant aid, his Majesty's servants had certainly seen good reason to give to the emperor. These pledges had been given long before the meeting of parliament, and might justly be considered as very eminently conducive to every measure and every success which has been since adopted and experienced. It is, I know, one among the grounds on which the right honourable gentleman has brought his accusation, that a part of the money was sent previously to the meeting of parliament, and another ground, that money has been sent since its meeting. I own, the advance to the emperor consists of sums sent since the meeting of the present parliament; but I do contend, that the pledges of these sums were the means by which the house of Austria endured adversity, and retrieved its prosperity. Had the emperor, in July and August last, had no assurance of your assistance, I will not say we should have been at this moment a ruined people, but I will say, that

the pecuniary security of England, and the territorial security of Austria, had been diminished, if not utterly destroyed.

On a former night, an honourable friend of mine used as an argument, the effect which he thought a public discussion of the measure would have to depreciate the credit of the country ; and I own I have not yet heard any thing that could induce me to think differently on that subject. The effect of a knowledge of the pecuniary distresses of the emperor, joined to the difficulty which a prompt supply would have produced, could not fail to bear with peculiarly embarrassing weight on the course of exchange. Whereas the transmission of the sum of 1,200,000*l.* in different sums, and at different periods, tended greatly to relieve the emperor, and preserve the credit of this country from that depression, which the same sum granted at once, and in the form of a public loan, would have occasioned. I need not therefore enumerate the particular dates of those bills. Our assurance to Austria was not confined to the meeting of parliament, not subjected to the delays of several months of recess, but it was given with reference to every situation of difficulty or danger in which the arms of the emperor might be placed by their resistance to the arms of France. When the Austrian troops were retreating from their severe and glorious combat with the French republicans, they surely merited every assistance this country could afford them ; but when, in the career of a brilliant series of the most splendid victories, those gallant men were urged by their emulation of the intrepidity of their invincible officers to acts of unparalleled prowess, his Majesty's servants found themselves called upon, most particularly called upon, to aid and promote their views, to soften their calamities, and to afford them means of securing their important conquests. On the conviction of the propriety of these sentiments, and of such conduct, it was, that the King's ministers had acted. Of the number of those who had been guided by these sentiments, I, Sir, certainly was one, not the least active to provide, nor, I trust, the least vigilant to manage prudently that pecuniary stimulus which, during the recess, and at other periods, was given to the arms of the empire. Our conduct,

therefore, Sir, does not respect the months of October, of November, nor December in particular, but it had a clear and unerring relation to every crisis and circumstance, to every moment of danger. In truth, the acts themselves were acts performed distinctly in compliance with solemn engagements; they were acts in execution of pledges which had been previously given. Acting during the recess from the conviction that these pledges were given by the letter and the spirit of the existing treaties, acting after the parliament was met under the sanction of these treaties, with no intention then, and surely none now, of setting up their own judgments as the standard of, or superior to, the judgment of the house of commons, ministers, I think, may be permitted to avail themselves of the exceptions of all similar treaties in favour of similar conduct. As to the transaction itself, no separation could fairly be made of the necessity which gave existence to the measure, and the motives which influenced its adoption. Even supposing the judgment of parliament could have been taken, the state of Germany was such, as could not have left gentlemen one moment to their doubts whether or no it was proper to assist the emperor. What ministers have done in pursuance of their pledge, was, however, done in a great measure before parliament could have been assembled to consider its expediency. Of the nature and effect of the services performed by the emperor, gentlemen may very readily judge. They have them recorded in the annals of very recent periods, annals the most brilliant, perhaps, in the history of the world. Thus, whether we judge of the services of Austria in whole, or only in part, I think gentlemen must concede to me that the services of the last three months have been at least such as merit our particular approbation. On this part of the subject I have, therefore, at present, scarcely any thing more to remark. I have, in the best manner I am able, stated to the house the circumstance of that situation which rendered it impossible for Austria to continue her warlike operations without assistance from this country. I have likewise endeavoured to render my own conceptions of the act of sending money to an ally without the previous consent of

parliament. In addition to these, I have submitted to the house those principles, in the practical exertion of which I pursued that line of conduct now so much the subject of the animadversions of the right honourable gentleman.

With this species of defence, I might in some measure rest satisfied: but I should still be wanting in duty to myself, did I not, before I sat down this night, desire the house to keep in memory the principles I have thus stated, as being those on which I acted; if I did not desire the house to compare these principles with my conduct. As to the question of extraordinaries, I have heard the idea suggested, and something like an argument attempted to be deduced from it, that if its spirit be adhered to, no part of a vote of credit can be employed to pay foreign troops. I have heard too, that of such an application of the public money so voted, our annals scarcely afford any, and if any, not apposite precedents. Sir, I think I can instance a number of precedents of this kind; I can instance to this house, and for the information of the right honourable gentleman, that votes of credit were appropriated by our ancestors to the payment of foreign troops. In times before the revolution, but of those times gentlemen seem unwilling to say much, in the reign immediately before the revolution, this very thing had been done by the crown; but, Sir, in periods subsequent to the revolution, in periods not the least favoured in our annals, although certainly not altogether free from the stains of calumny, but especially of party violence, in the reign of King William, during the year 1701, accompanied by circumstances of a singularly important and curious nature, the parliament voted an extra sum for the payment of foreign forces. This sum was voted not regularly as a vote of credit, but it succeeded the granting of a vote of credit, and was a measure which, although it occasioned some trifling opposition, was carried unanimously. Such was the conduct of our ancestors at the revolution. In the reign of Queen Ann, a reign reprehended undoubtedly by some, a reign which had unhappily encouraged, if not occasioned and fomented those differences which rendered the Tories so implacable.

ble against the Whigs; in that reign, thus chequered by the persecutions, sanguinary persecutions, first of the Whigs, but latterly, and I will confess with not less cruelty, begun and continued by the Tories: in this reign, and in the years 1704 and 1705, both subsidies and grants had been employed in paying foreign forces. This too was done without the authority of parliament. In 1706, a transaction more directly characteristic of this, for which the ministers of the present day are censured, was publicly avowed, and as publicly discussed; yet it seems the right honourable gentleman had over-looked it. This at least seems to be the case; or, if known, he certainly ought to have abandoned his assertion. There is to be met with in the annals of the parliament of that day, an account of three different sums, each considered, by the opposition of that day, as violations of the constitution—a remittance to the Duke of Savoy, to the Emperor, and to Spain. A sum too had been paid in the same manner to the Landgrave of Hesse, for a corps of his troops then in the pay of England. All these sums were not voted regularly after the specific propositions, submitted for that purpose to the house, but were remitted to those sovereigns without the previous consent of parliament. Not even estimates of the services, for which the sums had been paid, were laid before the house till six weeks after its meeting. The sum sent to the emperor was peculiarly distinguished—it had been transmitted, not at the close, not during the recess of that session in which it was first announced to parliament, but before the end of the preceding session. These proceedings did certainly attract notice. The house of commons and the public had been addressed on the unconstitutionality of the measure; then as now there had been employed every effort which ingenuity could suggest; every vehicle of public communication rendered a vehicle of asperity and censure on the conduct of ministers. It became the subject of a solemn discussion—a discussion, apparently not less vehement, than it was laboured and profuse. But how, Sir, did the ministers of that day retire from the combat? Did they retire overwhelmed with the virulence and abuse, the

censure of the discerning and temperate members of that parliament? Or were those their actions distinguished by the approbation of the commons of Great Britain? Sir, the minister of that day had the satisfaction to see the attack of his adversaries repelled, and their expressions of censure changed to approbation. That minister, Sir, heard his conduct applauded, and the journals of this house were made to bear record that the sense of its members was, that the sums advanced to the emperor on that occasion had been productive not only of the preservation of the empire, but had also supported and maintained the interests of Europe. In the year 1718, in the beginning of the reign of George the First, an instance of the application of the public money occurred, which, though not so analogous as the last, I think it right to mention. A message had been received from his Majesty, soliciting the aid of the commons to make such an augmentation of the actual forces of the country as might be deemed necessary to place it in a respectable state of defence; and that because there had been an appearance of an invasion.—At this time his Majesty takes Dutch troops into his pay, and the money voted to raise and maintain native troops is disbursed for the use of a foreign corps. It is true this body of Dutch troops were landed in England, and their services confined to it; but not even these affected much the application of the fact as a precedent. However, Sir, in the year 1734, a period nearer our own times, a general vote of credit was granted. That vote of credit was applied on such occasions, and for such purposes as might at any time, during its existence, arise out of the exigencies of the time. On the 18th of February of the subsequent year, a vote of credit was also granted, and a treaty concluded with Denmark. And, Sir, if I have not totally misconceived the passage of our parliamentary history where these facts are stated, this last, as well as the vote of credit immediately preceding it, was applied to purposes in their nature not unlike those to which necessity impelled the ministers of the present day to apply the vote of 1796. I might also refer gentlemen to another instance of an advance to foreign troops. An advance to

the Duke of Arenberg, commander of the Austrian forces, in the year 1742, was noticed in debate, and censured in the administration of Mr. Pelham—a name this as dear to the friends of constitutional liberty as perhaps any that could be mentioned: but the enquiry was avoided by moving the previous question. It happened, however, that, not long after, the same question was made the subject of a specific discussion. It appeared that the advance had been made under the authority of an assurance expressed by Lord Carteret, and not in consequence of any previous consent of parliament; but it appeared also that the progress of the Austrian troops was considerably accelerated by the influence of that aid, and their subsequent successes owing chiefly to it. The vote of censure, therefore, which had been founded on the act of Lord Carteret, was amended, and the advance declared necessary to the salvation of the empire. But, Sir, let us compare the crisis of 1796 with that of 1787, when the expenses incurred by our endeavours to protect Holland were recognized under the head of secret services. This, too, was an unanimous recognition of the act which, had it been the offspring of 1796, the right honourable gentleman, influenced by his new opinions, would, I have no doubt, marked with his disapprobation; but so stood the fact then.

The right honourable gentleman avoids no opportunity to express his disrespect for the memory of the last parliament. But surely he ought to recollect, that, although he has often told us that the last parliament completely undermined the constitution, there yet remain principles for which the right honourable gentleman thinks it his duty to contend, under the sanction of which, he is yet permitted to accuse his Majesty's ministers as criminals for doing that which necessity provoked, and which precedents warrant. Undoubtedly, Sir, I think that whether the people of England will hereafter approve of the conduct of opposition as constitutional conduct, they will admit that it is a vigilant opposition. On the present occasion, however, much of that vigilance seems to me to have been exerted in vain. They have not, with all their industry, fallen even in the way of one pre-

cedent, that might have induced some little relaxation of their inordinate zeal. They have not discovered that the act they have marked with every species of obloquy, of which language is capable, is an act that has been again and again approved of. It is even within the admitted principle of successive parliaments. But the members who sat in the last parliament have not forgot that, when a loan of four millions and a half was proposed to be granted to the emperor, the intention of granting that loan was known as early as February 1795. A message had been received from his Majesty, stating that a negociation was pending with the emperor to maintain 200,000 men. The loan to be granted when the negociation succeeded, and when it failed, to be mentioned. Soon after the answer to this message was communicated to the throne, a motion was made for an account of 250,000*l.* advanced to the emperor in May 1795 ; and again a similar motion was made for an account of 300,000*l.* also advanced to the emperor in the month of May following. With respect to these sums, it was agreed by the house before the loan was debated, that they might be afterwards made good out of the loan. This, Sir, I have stated to shew that the members who sat in the last parliament cannot be altogether ignorant of the principles of the constitution. After the negociation was concluded, the loan was debated ; the house was divided, but no objection was made to these advances. On the subject of the Prince of Condé's army being supplied with money by this country, I can only say, that whatever sums that army has as yet received have been paid, on account of services rendered, as forming a part of the Austrian forces. The circumstance of a part of the 1,200,000*l.* stated as being sent to the emperor, being afterwards received in this country in part payment of the interest due on the second Austrian loan, is also easily accounted for, these payments, on account of being in their nature the same, as if the emperor, instead of being so accommodating to himself as to pay the money, by his agent, on the spot, had ordered it to be sent to Vienna, and transmitted by the same post to this court.

I may now, Sir, I think be permitted to ask on what principle of justice a criminal charge can be brought against me for merely having followed the uniform tenour of precedent, and the established line of practice? By what interpretation of a candid and liberal mind can I be judged guilty of an attempt, wantonly to violate the constitution? I appeal to the right honourable gentleman himself, who is not the last to contend for the delicacy which ought to be used in imputing criminal motives to any individual, and to urge in the strongest terms the attention which ought to be shewn to the candid and impartial administration of justice. In what country do we live? and by what principles are we to be tried? By the maxims of natural justice and constitutional law, or by what new code of some revolutionary tribunal? Not longer than a year and a half since, the same principle was adopted, and suffered to pass without any animadversion; and now, at a crisis of ten-fold importance, and where the measure has not out-run the exercise of a sound discretion, it is made the foundation of a criminal charge. We are accused with a direct and wanton attack upon the constitution. It is not supposed that we have been actuated by any but the blackest and most malignant motives. We are not allowed the credit of having felt any zeal for the interest of our country, nor of those advantages which the measure has produced to the common cause.

I have now weighed the whole merits of the transaction before the house, and with them I am well content to leave the decision. While we claim a fair construction on the principles and intentions which have guided our conduct, if it shall appear that it has in the smallest instance deviated from any constitutional principle, we must submit to the consequence, whatever be the censure or the punishment. It is our duty, according to the best of our judgment, to consult for the interest of the country; it is your sacred and peculiar trust to preserve inviolate the principles of the constitution. I throw myself upon your justice, prepared in every case to submit to your decision; but with considerable confidence, that I shall experience your approba-

tion. If I should be disappointed, I will not say that the disappointment will not be heavy, and the mortification severe; at any rate however it will to me be matter of consolation, that I have not, from any apprehension of personal consequences, neglected to pursue that line of conduct which I conceive to be essential to the interests of the country and of Europe. But while I bow with the most perfect submission to the determination of the house, I cannot but remark on the extraordinary language which has been used on this question. Ministers have been broadly accused with a wanton and a malignant desire to violate the constitution: it has been stated that no other motive could possibly have actuated their conduct. If a charge of such malignant intention had been brought against men, who have affirmed the present war to be neither just nor necessary, and who on that ground cannot be supposed friendly to its success; who have extolled, nay, even exulted in the prodigies of French valour; who have gloried in the successes of the foes of civil liberty, the hostile disturbers of the peace of Europe, men who blasphemously denied the existence of the Deity, and who had rejected and trampled on every law, moral and divine; who have exclaimed against the injustice of bringing to trial persons who had associated to overawe the legislature; those who gravely and vehemently asserted, that it was a question of prudence, rather than a question of morality, whether an act of the legislature should be resisted; those who were anxious to expose and aggravate every defect of the constitution; to reprobate every measure adopted for its preservation, and to obstruct every proceeding of the executive government to ensure the success of the contest in which we are engaged in common with our allies; I say, if such a charge of deliberate and deep-rooted malignity were brought against persons of this description, I should conceive that even then the rules of candid and charitable interpretation would induce us to hesitate in admitting its reality; much more when it is brought against individuals, whose conduct, I trust, has exhibited the reverse of the picture I have now drawn. I appeal to the justice of the house, I rely on

their candour; but, to gentlemen who can suppose ministers capable of those motives which have been imputed to them on this occasion, it must be evident that I can desire to make no such appeal.

An amendment was afterwards moved by Mr. Bragge, to leave out from the first word "that", and to insert, "the measure of advancing the several sums of money, which appear, from the accounts presented to the House in this session of parliament, to have been issued for the service of the Emperor, though not to be drawn into precedent, but upon occasions of special necessity, was, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, a justifiable and proper exercise of the discretion vested in his Majesty's ministers by the vote of credit and calculated to produce consequences, which have proved highly advantageous to the common cause and to the general interests of Europe:" which upon a division was carried;

Ayes - - - - - 285

Noes - - - - - 81

December 30, 1796.

Mr. PITT moved the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message, respecting the failure of the negotiation for peace that had been carrying on with the French Government:

"GEORGE R.

"It is with the utmost concern that his Majesty acquaints the House of Commons, that his earnest endeavours to effect the restoration of peace have been unhappily frustrated, and that the negotiation, in which he was engaged, has been abruptly broken off by the peremptory refusal of the French Government to treat, except upon a basis evidently inadmissible, and by their having in consequence required his Majesty's Plenipotentiary to quit Paris within 48 hours.

"His Majesty has directed the several memorials and papers which have been exchanged in the course of the late discussion, and the account transmitted to his Majesty of its final result, to be laid before the House.

"From these papers his Majesty trusts, it will be proved to the whole world that his conduct has been guided by a sincere desire to effect the restoration of peace on principles suited to the relative situation of the belligerent powers, and essential for the permanent interests of this kingdom, and the general security of Europe: whilst his enemies have ad-

vanced pretensions at once inconsistent with those objects, unsupported even on the grounds on which they were professed to rest, and repugnant both to the system established by repeated treaties, and to the principles and practice which have hitherto regulated the intercourse of independent nations.

“ In this situation, his Majesty has the consolation of reflecting, that the continuance of the calamities of war can be imputed only to the unjust and exorbitant views of his enemies; and his Majesty, looking forward with anxiety to the moment when they may be disposed to act on different principles, places in the mean time the fullest reliance, under the protection of Providence, on the wisdom and firmness of his parliament, on the tried valour of his forces by sea and land, and on the zeal, public spirit, and resources of his kingdoms, for vigorous and effectual support in the prosecution of a contest, which it does not depend on his Majesty to terminate, and which involves in it the security and permanent interests of this country, and of Europe. G. R.”

The message being read from the chair, Mr. PITT addressed the House to the following effect:

I am perfectly aware, Sir, in rising upon the present occasion, that the motion which I shall have the honour to propose to the house, in consequence of his Majesty's most gracious message and founded upon the papers with which it was accompanied, involves many great and important considerations. Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained upon some of the topics which they contain, I am sure there will exist only one sentiment with regard to the event which they announce. We must all concur in that deep and poignant regret which is naturally excited by the information that the negotiation, in which his Majesty was engaged, is abruptly broken off; a negociation by which we fondly wished, and perhaps might have sanguinely hoped, that upon terms of peace, which it would have been wise and prudent, and honourable in this country to have embraced, we should at length have been enabled to have retired from a contest undertaken in compliance with the faith of treaties and for the defence of our allies; undertaken to repel the daring unprincipled, and unprovoked aggression of the enemy; undertaken for the maintenance of our own independence and the support of our own rights; undertaken for the

preservation of our constitution and laws, and in obedience to those principles of policy by which the conduct of England has so long and so gloriously been directed ; undertaken from a union of all these causes and a combination of all these motives, to a degree for which the annals of the world present no parallel. From the documents of which the house are now in possession, and from the proceedings of which they are now enabled to judge, I trust it will appear, that if it was thought necessary to embark in the contest upon such urgent grounds and such powerful considerations, his Majesty's ministers have evinced a perseverance equally sincere in their endeavours to restore peace to Europe upon fair, just, and honourable grounds, in spite of the discouragements under which they laboured, and the difficulties with which they had to encounter. To whatever cause, however, the failure of the negociation is to be ascribed, it must be matter of regret to all, and to none more than to myself. Whatever subject of personal anxiety I may have had, in addition to the common feelings of humanity and for the general happiness of mankind, my sentiments are only those of disappointment. But I have the satisfaction of knowing that this feeling of disappointment is unaccompanied with any reflection, unmingled with regret, unembittered with despondency, as it must be evident to the world, that the event which we deplore can be attributed only to the pride, the ambition, the obstinacy, and the arrogant pretensions of the enemy. I feel this consolation annexed to the task which we have now to perform, that we can come forward, not unaware of the difficulty, yet not dismayed by the prospect, prepared to review the situation in which we are placed, to ask what are the causes from which the failure of the negociation proceeded, what opinion it authorises us to form, what conduct it requires us to pursue, what duty it imposes upon us to discharge, and what efforts we are called upon to exert in our own defence, and what support and assistance policy demands that we should grant to our allies for the vigorous and effectual prosecution of a contest in which we are compelled to persevere.

As to the next point which I shall have to consider, I cannot expect equal unanimity; not, however, that it is much more complicated, although undoubtedly not so self-evident. I allude to the failure of the negociation, in point of terms, and which renders a continuance of the war necessary; but have we not the consolation that the aggression has uniformly been on the side of the enemy, and that nothing has been wanting on the part of this country to restore peace, on the grounds on which peace alone would be desirable? When we wish for peace, we wish for a secure and permanent peace, and the secure and permanent possession of those blessings with which peace is accompanied.

If, in that necessity to which we are now subjected, of pursuing with vigour the war in which we are engaged, we can look for consolation, amid the sacrifices with which it will be attended, to the original aggression of the enemy by which it was occasioned, to the consideration, that no endeavour has been omitted which can evince our earnest and sincere desire of peace, and that this sentiment still predominates to put an end to the contest upon those principles which alone can render that event desirable; which can secure a peace, safe, honourable, and permanent; which can restore those blessings which it is calculated to produce, and those advantages for which it is worthy to be desired;—if we have adhered to these considerations, we have done every thing which it was in our power to perform. We may lament the failure of his Majesty's exertions upon this occasion, but at least we have not to regret that they have been wholly without advantage. They must prove to which party the prolongation of the war is to be imputed; they will tend at once to unite England and to divide France; they will animate our endeavours with new energy and new confidence, while they must have the effect to enfeeble and to embarrass the operations of the enemy. The question is not merely how far his Majesty's ministers and those to whose province it is committed to judge of the terms upon which peace ought to be concluded, and what offers are to be proposed, (a duty always attended with difficulty,

but in the present circumstances peculiarly embarrassed and unusually critical) acted properly in the conditions upon which they were willing to treat : but after the propositions which were made had been rejected ; when, instead of yours, terms utterly inadmissible and glaringly extravagant were substituted ; when, to a peremptory rejection was added the refusal of all farther discussion ; when the negociation was abruptly broken off, and his Majesty's ambassador was sent away ; when all this is accompanied with a proceeding still more insulting than the original dismissal, when a condition is reserved, which is not even the semblance, but which stands undisguised as the most glaring mockery of negociation, it remains for the house to judge whether any thing has been wanting upon the part of ministers, whether any thing more is required to display the sentiments and the views of the enemy. It remains to be seen whether there are any gentlemen in this house, who, as friends to peace, as friends to their country, who, consistent with the principles of statesmen, or the feelings of patriots, can discover any alternative in the ultimate line of conduct to be pursued. From the manner in which what I have now said has been received, I hope it will not be incumbent upon me to dwell more particularly upon this topic, before I advert to others which come previously to be considered.

The two leading points which arise from the views connected with the subject in discussion, are, the sentiment which it is proper to express upon the steps to be taken by his Majesty for the purpose of obtaining peace, and then, combining the offers made with the rejection of the enemy, and the circumstances with which it was accompanied, what sentiment parliament and the nation ought to entertain, with regard to the conduct necessary to be adopted for our own security, for maintaining the cause of our allies, and protecting the independence of Europe. After the communications which have already been made of the former steps taken by this country, and on the part of the emperor, for the purpose of bringing the contest to a termination, it would be unnecessary to dwell upon the particulars of

these transactions. I would beg leave, however, to remind the house, that, in March 1796, offers were made to the French government, by his Majesty's envoy at Basle, Mr. Wickham, to treat for a general peace, in a manner which of all others had been most usual in a complicated war, a mode sanctioned by custom and justified by experience, which had been commonly found successful in attaining the objects for which it was intended; yet this proposal met with a refusal, and was affected to be received as a mark of insincerity. We find the enemy advancing a principle, to which I shall afterwards more particularly advert; so manifestly unjust, and so undeniably absurd, that whatever difference of opinion subsisted upon other points, there was no man living had the temerity to support it. The question upon the former discussions to which this transaction gave rise, was, whether the principle to which I allude was fairly imputed. In the answer to Mr. Wickham's note, when we found the government of France advancing a law of her own internal constitution, to cancel the obligation of treaties, and to annul the public law of Europe, the only doubt was, whether it was fair and candid, upon such a foundation, to ascribe to the directory the reality of such a pretension. The principle itself I am sure can never be successfully defended upon any law of nations or any argument of reason. The emperor too, in spite of the refusal with which the application of this country had been received; in spite of the discouragement which a new attempt presented; did, at the opening of the campaign, renew the offers for negotiating a general peace upon the principles upon which the proposition of this country had been founded. In the course of this eventful year, so chequered with remarkable vicissitudes, before the successes of the enemy, which unfortunately so rapidly followed the breaking of the armistice, and before the glorious tide of victory by which the latter period of the campaign had been distinguished, many instances occurred for the application of their principle. The proposition of the emperor, however, was received nearly in the same manner with our own; and even the answer which it produced was con-

ceived in the same tone, and conveyed the same unfounded imputation, excepting that there were some topics with regard to points of etiquette and differences about form, which, upon the application of this country, had not been observed till they were renewed upon the perusal of reports of certain proceedings in this house, whether faithfully detailed or not I will not enquire. The answer which the emperor received was, that he might send a plenipotentiary to Paris to treat for a peace, consistent with the laws and constitution of the republick. Notwithstanding the discouragement which the repeated experience of former disappointments was calculated to produce, his Majesty, retaining that desire of putting a period to hostilities by which he was uniformly animated, felt some hope from the distress to which France was reduced, and from the embarrassments under which she laboured, that a renewed proposal would be welcomed with a more friendly reception. To shew that the inveterate disposition which the enemy had manifested did not discourage his Majesty from giving another chance of success to his ardent wishes, without having witnessed any indication upon their part of sentiments more pacific or more conciliatory, without their having discovered any retraction of the principles which had been advanced in reply to his first proposal, his Majesty determined to try the experiment of a new attempt of negociation, to the circumstances of which I shall again recur.

Upon many occasions during the present contest it had been discussed, whether it was politic for this country to appeal to negociation in whatever circumstances the enemy were placed. Gentlemen on the other side were accustomed to press the argument, that in no situation could negociation be humiliating. If a sincere desire of peace, it was said, does exist, there are modes of ascertaining the dispositions of the enemy, of making your wishes known, and making advances to the attainment of the object, without involving any question of etiquette or provoking any discussion of forms.—Of all the modes then recommended, that of application through the medium of a neutral minister was the most approved. After the reception which the successive pro-

posals of this country, and of the emperor, received at Basle, the mode of application by a neutral power, by that very power which had been again and again cited as an instance of the good faith of the French government, and their respect for independent states, was at length adopted, and the Danish minister was pitched upon for this purpose. In this proceeding it was not the object to announce on what terms this country was willing to conclude a peace, not to avoid any objections of etiquette, not to evade any discussion of preliminary formalities, but merely to ascertain the point, whether the directory would grant passports to a confidential person whom his Majesty was willing to send to Paris. The application was accordingly made by the Danish resident, and, after an interval of some days' delay, this step was allowed to pass in silence; to a written application no answer was returned, and at last a verbal notification was given, that the directory could not listen to any indirect application through the medium of neutral powers, and that a plenipotentiary might proceed to the frontiers, and there wait for the necessary passports.

I would now ask the house to judge, if it had really been the wish of his Majesty's ministers to avail themselves of the plausible grounds for proceeding no farther, which were then presented, which could so easily be justified by a reference to the conduct of the French government, and by the dispositions by which experience had proved them to be guided, would they have been very eager again to try the issue of new attempts? But even to this they submitted, and by a flag of truce sent to the governor of Calais, directly demanded the necessary passports.—The directory, now feeling the eagerness with which this country pursued the desire of terminating the contest by negotiation, and, foreseeing the odium with which the refusal would be attended, were compelled, I repeat, were compelled, to grant the passports, and thus to afford to his Majesty the opportunity of presenting the outline of the terms upon which peace might be restored. Under circumstances like these, with the experience of an uniform tenor of conduct which testified the very reverse of

any disposition to a cordial co-operation for the re-establishment of peace, there was little hope that the French government would keep pace with the offers proposed by this country, and it was foreseen that it would rest with his Majesty, after stimulating their reluctant progress through every part of the discussion, to encounter the farther difficulty of proposing specific terms. In this embarrassing situation the first thing to be done was to endeavour to establish what is at once conformable to reason, sanctioned by usage, and agreeable to universal practice since negociation was first reduced to a system; I mean some basis upon which the negociation was to be founded. How usual such a practice had been, it would be unnecessary to argue; how reasonable, it would be impossible to dispute; as it must be evident that such a mode of proceeding must conduce to abridge the delay with which a discussion of this kind is apt to be attended, to afford a clue to that labyrinth of complicated interests that are to be considered, and to supply some rule of stating mutual propositions. It would be equally unnecessary, as this mode was to be adopted in a negociation where we, for ourselves directly, had so little to ask, and for our allies so much, and where the interests of Europe demanded such important claims; where we had to treat with a country which had advanced principles that destroyed all former establishments; that cancelled all received laws and existing treaties; that overthrew all experience of past proceeding. This basis then was to be a basis of compensation, not of ambition or aggrandizement, but that compensation which was due for the conquests achieved by the valour and perseverance of our forces from the acquisitions gained by the enemy; a basis than this I am confident more equitable, or more just, better calculated to secure the interests of our allies, to maintain the independence of Europe, or more honourable to this country, never was proposed. But whether this basis be reasonable or not, is not now so much the enquiry, as another proof of the views of the enemy is disclosed, and a fresh instance of the inveterate disposition of the French government is displayed. Before any explicit answer to the basis proposed was returned; when

it was understood that it was to be rejected, Lord Malmesbury is required, within twenty-four hours, to present his *ultimatum*. It appears, however, from the able manner in which Lord Malmesbury conducted himself upon this demand, that this demand was not insisted upon, and to his explanation, they replied only by an evasive answer, which announced their refusal of the basis proposed, and intimated the extravagant pretensions they were desirous to substitute. I will now put to the recollection of the house the public discussions, to which the subject of the basis of negociation presented to the French government gave rise. I will not say that the public was unanimous, nor will I pretend to decide in what proportions it was divided. None, however, doubted that this basis would not be agreed to. In the public discussion to which the plan was subjected (by this I do not mean parliamentary discussions) and in the writings which it produced, particularly in the metropolis, the argument maintained was, that the principle was unreasonable, and ought not to have been offered. The directory, however, thought proper to accept what it was argued in this country ought to have been refused, and the principle of compensation was admitted.

Having, I trust, shewn therefore, from the extorted confession which arises out of every statement, that the basis of compensation was accepted, there follow the particular terms, as far as they were the subject of negociation. It is a point well understood that the final terms to be considered as binding upon the parties, never form a part of the original proposition. What, however, is the case here? When the first advances were made by this country, they were met by no corresponding offers by the directory, every difficulty that was started and removed, prepared only new cavils; the demands made by us were accompanied by no disclosure of the terms to which they would accede. After a reluctant admission of the basis, they insisted upon a specific statement of the objects of compensation. Under circumstances similar to those upon which the negociation was begun, the difficulties with which it is attended must be obvious, and the common practice has been, as far as possible, to divide them, to

render the statement of terms mutual, to give reciprocally, and at the same time, the explanations, the concessions, and the demands upon which each party is disposed to insist. The propriety of this is obvious. Without such a mode of proceeding it is impossible to know what value the one sets upon a particular concession, or a particular acquisition, and upon what conditions this is to be abandoned, and how the other is to be compensated. This difficulty obtains in all negotiations, more particularly where doubts are entertained of the sincerity of the party with whom you have to deal, but most of all when no advance, no reciprocal offer is made. How difficult then must it have been under all the circumstances of this case to produce specific terms with any probability of success or advantage. Yet the same motives which had induced his Majesty on former occasions to surmount the obstacles presented by the enemy, induced him here likewise to remove every pretence of cavil. Plans were given in, signed by Lord Malmesbury, stating likewise terms for the allies of this country. In the outline, two things are to be kept separate and distinct,—the compensations demanded for our allies, and those which were intended to protect the balance of Europe.

I need not argue again that a basis of compensation is reasonable;—that I am entitled to assume as admitted: but to what enormous extent it was retracted, I am now to state. During that period of adverse fortune which has since by the valour and glory of the gallant Imperial army so remarkably been retrieved, considerable possessions belonging to Austria and other states were added to the acquisitions of the enemy. On the other hand, the success of our brave troops, retarded indeed in particular quarters by some untoward circumstances, though not obstructed, had added to our distant possessions, and extended, by colonial acquisitions, the sources of our commerce, our wealth, and our prosperity, to a degree unparalleled even in the annals of this country. Feeling the pressure, which the war, no doubt, gave to our commerce, but feeling too that it neither affected the sources of our commerce, nor would ultimately retard the full tide of our prosperity, I was convinced that the temporary em-

barrassments which occurred, were less the effect of a real distress, than of an accidental derangement arising from our encreasing capital and extended commerce. In looking round, you discovered no symptom of radical decay, no proof of consuming strength; and although I have been accused of advancing a paradox, while I maintained this proposition, I am convinced that the embarrassment stated as an evidence of decline, was a proof of the reality and the magnitude of our resources. I do not state these circumstances, to give any one an idea that I do not ardently wish for peace, but to shew that we are not yet arrived at so deplorable a state of wretchedness and abasement, as to be compelled to make any insecure and dishonourable compromise. What, on the other hand, was the situation of the enemy? They at first indeed were enabled to employ gigantic means of support, which from their extravagant nature, were temporary, not permanent. They find also the additional expedient of disseminating new, unheard of, destructive principles; these they poured forth from the interior of France, into all the quarters of Europe, where no rampart could be raised to oppose the dangerous, the fatal inundation. Although madness and fanaticism carried them thus far for a time, yet no rational man will deny that those persons formed a fair and reasonable conclusion, who thought that such resources could not be attended with either duration or stability. I need hardly recur to the subject of French finance, though it has a very considerable effect indeed upon the question. I have on this subject been accused of bringing forward groundless surmises, of using fanciful reasoning, of stating elaborate theories without authority. I have even been complimented on my dexterity at this sort of argument, for the kind purpose of afterwards converting it into ridicule; but I shall not now stop to confirm what in this respect I have formerly asserted: I may surely, however, suppose that the admissions of the executive directory are true, particularly when officially conveyed in the form of a message to one of their councils. Are we told by themselves, that the only pay of their troops are the horrors of nakedness and famine; that their state contractors,

their judges, and all other public functionaries, receive no part of their salaries; that the roads are impassable, that the public hospitals and general interests of charity are totally neglected, that nothing, in short, remains in a state of organization but murder and assassination?—Is this a true picture drawn by themselves, and can this be the time for Europe to prostrate itself at the foot of France,—suppliantly to bow the knee, and ignominiously to receive its law?

If these considerations would not have justified this country in refusing to treat unless upon the principle of restoring to the emperor the territories of which he has been stripped, at least it is sufficient reason to entitle us to refuse to the French republic in the moment of debilitated power and exhausted resource, what we should have disdained to grant to France in the proudest days of her prosperous and flourishing monarchy. It was reason enough why we should not desert our allies, nor abandon our engagements, and why we should not agree to yield up to France for the pretence of preventing future wars, what for two centuries our ancestors thought it wise to contend to prevent the French from obtaining possession of; and why, after the recorded weakness of the republic, we ought not to resign without a struggle, what the power and the riches of France in other times could never extort. What then were we to attain by the conquests we had achieved? For ourselves, we had nothing to ask; we demanded the return of no ancient possessions; we sued not for liberty to maintain our independence, to reject the fraternal embrace, and prevent the organization of treason. These do not rest upon the permission of the enemy; they depend upon the valour, the intrepidity and the patriotism of the people of this country. We desired, Sir, only to preserve our good faith inviolate, and were ready to sacrifice all our own advantages, to obtain what we could not honourably give away without the consent of the emperor. Could we possibly ask less at the outset of a negotiation? I touch, no doubt, upon a delicate subject, but I ask, could we even have demanded the consent of the emperor to ask less? Whatever might have been the disposition of the emperor

to peace, would he have been content to agree to inferior terms, when the campaign was not yet closed,—when the enemy were yet struck with the effects of the brilliant and glorious success with which the Imperial arms have lately been attended on the side of the Rhine, when the exertions in Italy might have been expected to communicate to the affairs of Austria in that quarter, the same tide of victory by which the frontiers of Germany were distinguished? Could we have asked less, consistently with the good faith we owe to that ally, to whose exertions and to whose victories we have been so much indebted; that ally to whom we are so closely bound by congenial feelings, with whom we participate in the glory of adversity retrieved, and of prosperity restored? In doing this, I am confident the house will agree in thinking that we do not do too much.

By the terms proposed, all the territory between the Rhine and the Moselle was to be ceded by France, subject to future modification. When the French conquests in Italy were stated as objects of restitution, it was not from that to be inferred that Savoy and Nice were included, for in no geographical view could they be considered as component parts of that country. All the propositions underwent discussion between the plenipotentiary of his Majesty and the French minister; only the British minister informed the minister of France, that as to the Netherlands, his Majesty could, on no account, retract any part of his propositions, but that every thing else should be subject to modification. These offers, Sir, I maintain to have been extremely liberal in their principle, and more so, when we consider the application of it. We carried the principle of compensation to the fullest extent, when we offered to give up all that we had taken, reserving one subject only for consideration, which depended on a treaty, and which I shall presently mention; and we asked no more than what, by the strictest ties of justice and honour, we were bound to demand. Let me appeal to every one present if this conduct was not fair, just, and reasonable; if it did not bespeak sincere intentions and an anxious wish on the part of his Majesty to procure peace, consistently with good faith

and security to himself and his allies, and if it was not entitled to a candid reception from the enemy! As to the value of the French possessions which we offered to give up, it must be confessed that the same evils with which France has been afflicted have been extended to the colonial possessions; they have undoubtedly been much depreciated, much impoverished; but after all, they are of infinite importance to the commerce and marine of France. The valuable post of St. Domingo; the military and commercial advantages of Martinique; the peculiarly favourable military situation of St. Lucia; the importance of Tobago to this country; when we combine these, and place them in an united point of view, we have some reason to doubt whether there was not some degree of boldness on the part of his Majesty's ministers to make such overtures; we have some reason to suspect the wisdom of the measure, rather than to cavil at the insufficiency of the offer.

I come now more particularly to mention what relates to the Spanish part of St. Domingo, in the late negotiation. By a former treaty with Spain, made at the peace of Utrecht, in the year 1713, Spain engages not to alienate any of her possessions in America and the West Indies, without the consent of Great Britain. Have we not then a right to take advantage of this circumstance, on the present occasion, and to hold out our consent to this alienation, as a part of the compensation offered on the part of this country? In what consists the right of the French to the Spanish parts of St. Domingo? Is it the right of possession? No! they never yet have been in possession. Is it then merely the right of title? No! for their title is derived from the alienation of the Spaniards, who had no right to transfer it without the consent of this country. But it may be said that this treaty is old and obsolete. On the contrary, having been kept sacred up to the year 1796, it has gained strength by a long prescription; besides it has been recognized and confirmed at the end of every war since that time, and particularly so in the definitive treaty of 1783. It may be objected, however, and has indeed been urged on this occasion, that England herself has violated this

treaty in the transaction of Pensacola and Florida; but this argument depends upon an obvious fallacy. The agreement with respect to the Spanish dominions in America and the West Indies was made between this country and Spain. Now, although the two parties to the agreement may, by consent at pleasure, modify their respective interests, it does not follow that either party can, without the consent and to the disadvantage of the other, introduce the interests of third parties. Upon every view of this subject, then, I ask if we have not a fair and reasonable right to avail ourselves of the advantages arising to us from the treaty of Utrecht?

Sir, I think, that from the great extent of the subject, it will be unnecessary for me to trouble the house with any farther observation on that part of it; but I must request the attention of the house to the nature of the terms proposed with respect to the meditated peace between this country and her allies; and first with respect to Holland, a country which, although now hostile to us, I cannot help considering as having, at the commencement of the present war, been concerned in alliance with us in carrying it on, and connected in our interest by every tie of internal policy—a country which is now only opposed to us in consequence of the restraint imposed by the overbearing arms of France. However, Sir, notwithstanding Holland was our ally, and an ally, whose protection against the common enemy was one of the causes of our entering into the war; yet, as circumstances have occurred, which have compelled Holland to become the enemy of this country, I must, of necessity, treat her as such; I must consider her in the relation, in which she stands with respect to France, though at the same time I cannot bring myself to forget she was formerly an ally, whose friendship was attended with reciprocal advantages to herself and to this country. I am satisfied, if it were possible to replace Holland in the situation in which she formerly stood, and restore her legitimate government, not nominally, but permanently and effectually, that such a restoration would undoubtedly redound to the advantage of this country. But as it is perhaps a question of too remote contin-

gency to consider the advantage which we should acquire by the restoration of Holland to her former system, such an event, either nominally or really, being extremely unlikely under the present aspect of things, I shall therefore refrain from arguing the point. Now, Sir, as to the conduct pursued on the part of this country, with regard to her connections with other powers, and supposing for the present that Holland may for a time remain subject to France, I may be allowed to assert that the terms proposed by this country, on behalf of her allies, were such as could only be dictated by a principle of moderation, of disinterestedness, and earnest desire for peace. This country having nothing to ask for herself, was induced to surrender a considerable part, nay, almost the whole of her acquisitions, for the purpose of inducing the French to give up to our allies that territory she has wrested from them.

The continental possessions which France had acquired from Holland, might perhaps be subject of discussion in what manner they were best to be arranged at once for the interest of Holland and of the allies. But these and the conquests made by this country must be considered, in the view of restitution, as merely an addition to the French power. We ought to consider that those possessions, with regard to which no relation was to be admitted, were to be retained, in order that they might not become acquisitions to the French government. In refusing to yield them up, we only refuse to put into the hands of the enemy the means of carrying into effect the deep laid schemes of ambition they have long cherished, and the plan they have conceived of undermining our Indian empire, and destroying our Indian commerce, by ceding out of our own hands, what may be deemed the bulwark of the wealth of this country, and the security of the Indian empire. These, indeed, were refused to be given up to our enemies; but every thing else which the valour and the arms of this country had acquired, which was valuable, was proposed to be made matter of negociation. This, Sir, was the nature of the propositions made at the very first moment when the negociation was commenced: and I again submit to the final decision

of the house, whether a proposition, including the restoration of every thing valuable which we had acquired, except that which we could not forego without manifest detriment to the most important interests of the country, was not founded in liberality and sincerity. Sir, I must beg leave to observe, that on this part of the subject I have been the more anxious to be explicit, because it is that part on which I lay the more particular stress, as tending to prove to the house, that every thing was done at the commencement, every thing distinctly stated, on which this country was willing to enter upon a negociation. I am the more desirous of impressing the house with this part of my argument, because I feel it material in order to enable them to form a determinate precise idea of the character and prominent features of the negociation itself. In return to the statements of compensation proposed by this country, the French government presented no *projet* of their own, they afforded no room for discussion, because they were actuated by motives very distant from conciliation.

This much I have thought it necessary to state, in vindication of the character of myself and colleagues, that the house may be enabled to see that we never lost sight of the idea of a peace advantageous for our allies, safe for Europe, and honourable to this country. With regard to any specific terms of peace, which it might be proper to adopt or refuse, I do not think it would be wise for the house to pronounce. This may still be considered as a dormant negociation, capable of being renewed; and it would be impolitic to give a pledge to any specific terms to which it might be impossible to adhere, and which can never be incurred without rashness. No man can be pledged to any particular terms, because in these he must be guided by a view of collateral circumstances, and a comparative statement of resources. All that I wish parliament to pronounce is, that they will add their testimony to the sincerity with which his Majesty has endeavoured to restore peace to Europe, and their approbation of the steps which were employed for its attainment. But even after their rejection of every proposition that was advanced, after all the difficulties they started, after all the cavils they

employed, after all the discouragements which they presented, when, at last, the French government had been compelled to open the discussion, the first thing that happens, after requiring a note containing specific proposals, is a captious demand to have it signed by Lord Malmesbury. This demand was complied with to deprive them of every pretence for breaking off the negotiation, and immediately they call for an *ultimatum* in twenty-four hours. The impossibility of complying with such a demand is obvious. Was it possible to reconcile discordances, to smooth opposition, or pronounce good understanding in this manner? Does it come within the scope of the negociation? Is an *ultimatum*, which means that demand which is to come the nearest to the views of all parties, and to state the lowest terms which could be offered, thus to be made out at random, without knowing what the enemy would concede on their part, or what they would accept on ours? A proposal, drawn up in such a manner, without explanation, without information, could have no good effect. It is a demand contrary to all reason and to all principle. With such a demand, therefore, it was impossible to comply; and in consequence of this, Lord Malmesbury received orders to quit Paris in forty-eight hours, and the territories of the republic as soon as possible.

Perhaps, however, I shall be told, that the negociation is not broken off, and that the French government have pointed out a new basis upon which they are still willing to proceed. There are two things upon this subject not unworthy of consideration. The time at which they propose this new basis, and what sort of basis it is that they propose. After having approved and acted upon the basis proposed by his Majesty's government; after having acknowledged, and, to all appearance, cordially acquiesced in it, as the ground of negociation; after having demanded an *ultimatum* at the very commencement of this negociation, and before any discussion had taken place, to be delivered in to the directory, in the space of twenty-four hours; and after dismissing the ambassador of the king with every mark of ignominy and insult, they propose a new basis, by which the nego-

ciation is to be carried on by means of couriers. And what is the reason they assign for this new basis? Because Lord Malmesbury acted in a manner purely passive, and because he could assent to nothing without dispatching couriers to obtain the sanction of his court. Here one cannot help remarking the studied perverseness of the temper of the French government. When a courier was dispatched to Paris, at the instance of the minister of a neutral power, in order to get a passport from the French government, it was denied. A courier could not even obtain a passport, though the application was made to the executive directory through the medium of the Danish minister. The request of the Danish minister was not enough; nothing could satisfy them but a British minister. Well, a British minister was sent. At the commencement of the negociation he had occasion frequently to send dispatches to his court, because it is very well known that there are a great number of difficulties which attend the opening of every negociation, and because Lord Malmesbury had been sent to Paris before the preliminaries, which are usually settled by means of couriers, were arranged. While these preliminaries were in a course of settling, Lord Malmesbury's presence was barely endured, and the frequent dispatches of his couriers were subjects of animadversion; but no sooner were these preliminaries settled, and the British minister delivered in a *projet*, when there was less necessity for dispatching couriers, when the period for discussion was arrived, when the personal presence of an ambassador was particularly necessary, and when the King's ministers announced to the French government that he was prepared to enter into discussion upon the official memorials containing his *projet*, than he was ordered to quit Paris, and leave the negociation to be carried on by means of couriers. Such is the precise form, and it was impossible to devise a better, in which a studied insult, refined and matured by the French directory, was offered to his Britannic Majesty.

I now come to state the broad plain ground on which the question rests, as far as the terms, upon which we are invited

to treat on this new basis, are concerned. After having started a variety of captious objections at the opening of the negociation, after the preliminaries were with much difficulty adjusted, after an *ultimatum* was demanded, almost before discussion had commenced, after the king's minister was ordered, in the most insulting manner, to leave the territories of France, after a retraction by the executive directory of the original basis of negociation, and the substitution of a new one in its place, they demand not as an *ultimatum*, but as a preliminary, to be permitted to retain all those territories of which the chance of war has given them a temporary possession, and respecting which they have thought proper, contrary to every principle of equity and the received laws of nations, to pass a constitutional law, declaring, as they interpret it, that they shall not be alienated from the republic. Now whether this be the principle of their constitution or not, upon which I shall afterwards have occasion to make some observations, it was at least naturally to be supposed that the principle had been virtually set aside when the former basis of negociation was recognized by the French directory; for it must have been a strange admission of the principle of reciprocal compensations indeed, if they were obliged by the rules of their constitution to retain all those conquests which we were most bound in duty and in honour to insist upon their giving up, (not by any mystery of a new constitution, which is little known, and even among those who know it of doubtful interpretation, but by public and known engagements) and if they were under the same constitutional necessity, which they certainly are, of demanding the restitution of those colonies formerly in their possession, but which they have lost in the course of the war. Notwithstanding, however, their disavowal of this principle in the admission of the former basis of the negociation, it is now alleged as a ground for the pretension, that they are entitled, as a matter of right, to demand from this country, not as an *ultimatum*, but as a preliminary to the discussion of any articles of treaty, that we shall make no proposals inconsistent with the laws and constitution of France.

I know of no law of nations which can in the remotest degree countenance such a perverse and monstrous claim. The annexation of territory to any state by the government of that state during the continuance of the war in which they have been acquired, can never confer a claim which supersedes the treaties of their powers, and the known and public obligations of the different nations of Europe. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that the separate act of a separate government can operate to the dissolution of the ties subsisting between other governments, and to the abrogation of treaties previously concluded: and yet this is the pretension to which the French government lay claim, and the acknowledgment of which they hold out not as an *ultimatum*, but as a preliminary of negotiation to the king of Great Britain and his allies. In my opinion, there is no principle of the law of nations clearer than this, that, when in the course of war any nation acquires new possessions, such nation has only temporary right to them, and they do not become property till the end of the war. This principle is incontrovertible, and founded upon the nature of things. For, supposing possessions thus acquired to be immediately annexed to the territory of the state by which the conquest was made, and that the conqueror was to insist upon retaining them, because he had passed a law that they should not be alienated, might not the neighbouring powers, or even the hostile power, ask—Who gave you a right to pass this law? What have we to do with the regulations of your municipal law? Or, what authority have you, as a separate state, by any annexation of territory to your dominions, to cancel existing treaties, and to destroy the equilibrium established among nations? Were this pretension to be tolerated, it would be a source of eternal hostility, and a perpetual bar to negotiation between the contending parties; because the pretensions of the one would be totally irreconcilable with those of the other.

This pretension in the instance of France has been as inconsistent in its operations as it was unfounded in its origin. The possessions which they have lost in the West Indies in the

course of the war, they made independent republics; and what is still more singular, Tobago, which they have lost in the war, and which is retained by British arms, is a part of indivisible France. I should not be surprised to hear that Ireland, in consequence of the rumour which has been circulated of their intention to attempt an invasion upon that country, is constitutionally annexed to the territories of the republic, or even that the city of Westminster is a part of indivisible France. There is a distinction, no doubt, between the Netherlands and the West-India islands, but it whimsically happens that this principle of law, that this constitutional pretension is least applicable to those possessions upon which it is held out as operating by the French Government, and that the Austrian Netherlands, even by the letter of their own constitution, ought to be exempted from its operation. I own I am little qualified to read a lecture upon the French constitution, and perhaps I shall be accused, in my interpretation of it, of pretending to understand it better than they do themselves. Here I must remind my accusers, however, that even M. Delacroix, that great master of the law of nations, allows that on this point the constitution is not perfectly clear, and gives that particular interpretation of it upon the authority of the best publicists. I again repeat it—that, in discussing the terms of a treaty with France, I am not obliged to know either her constitution or her laws, because it was unreasonable for her to advance a pretension upon a foundation inconsistent with the received law of nations and the established nature of things. But it will demonstrate their insincerity and the shallowness of the subterfuges to which they have been obliged to have recourse, if I can shew that no such law is in existence, and that their constitution leaves the government entirely at liberty to dispose of the possessions which they have acquired in war, in any way they may think proper. I have looked through this voluminous code [holding a copy of the constitution in his hand], and I think it may be considered as an instance that a constitution upon paper, digesting and regu-

lating the conduct of municipal jurisprudence as well as of foreign relations, does not lead to the best application of the true principles of political economy. In the copy of their constitution all I find upon the subject is a declaration that France is one and indivisible, which is followed by a long list of departments. And here I would recommend it to gentlemen to read the report upon which this decree was founded, in which they will find that it was passed for the avowed purpose of obtaining for France an indisputable ascendant in Europe, and of suppressing the trade and commerce of rival nations. Overlooking however, the principle of the decree, if it was found inapplicable to the possessions of the French in the East and West Indies, which they had previous to the war, it was certainly much more inapplicable to the Austrian Netherlands, of which they have got possession in the course of the war; and therefore the government, in holding out the principle as operating upon the latter, and not to the former, apply it to that part of their territory to which it is least applicable.

If we look at the provisions under the next title, *respecting relations with foreign powers*, the argument against the existence of any such principle in their constitution is confirmed: for we find the executive government is there vested with the full power of treating, but all their treaties must be ratified by the legislative bodies, with the singular exception of secret articles, which it is in the power of the directory to put in execution without being ratified, a proof that they are authorized by the constitution to alienate territories belonging to the republic. Allowing, however, that it is a principle of their constitution, is it an evil without a remedy? No. M. Delacroix confesses that it may be remedied, but not without the inconvenience of calling the primary assemblies. And are we then, after all the exertions that we have made in order to effect the object of general pacification, and after being baffled in all our efforts by the stubborn pride and persevering obstinacy of the French government, after our propositions have been slighted, and our ambassador insulted, are we now to consent to sacrifice our engagements, and to violate our treaties, because, forsooth, it would be at-

tended with some inconvenience for them to call their primary assemblies, in order to cancel a law which is incompatible with the principle of fair negociation? Shall we forget our own honour, our own dignity, and our own duty, so far, as to acquiesce in a principle as a preliminary to negociation, intolerable in its tendency, unfounded in fact, inconsistent with the nature of things, and inadmissible by the law of nations?

But this is not all the sacrifice they demand. This is not all the degradation to which they would have us submit. You must also engage, and as a preliminary too, to make no propositions which are contrary to the laws of the constitution, and the *treaties* which bind the republic. Here they introduce a new and extraordinary clause, imposing a restriction still more absurd and unreasonable than the other. The republic of France may have made secret treaties which we know nothing about, and yet that government expects that we are not to permit our propositions to interfere with these treaties. In the former instance we had a text upon which to comment, but here we are in the state of those diviners who were left to guess at the dreams which they were called upon to interpret. How is it possible for this country to know what secret articles there may be in the treaty between France and Holland? How can we know what the Dutch may have ceded to France, or whether France may not have an oath in heaven never to give up the territories ceded to her by Holland? Who can know but her treaty with Spain contains some secret article guaranteeing to the latter the restitution of Gibraltar, or some important possession now belonging to his Majesty? And how can I know whether the performance of all these engagements may not be included under the pretension which the French government now holds out? How is it possible for me to sound where no line can fathom? And even after you have acceded to these preliminaries, in what situation do you stand? After accepting of terms of which you are entirely ignorant, and giving up all that it is of importance for you to keep, you at last arrive at a discussion of the government which France may chuse to give to Italy, and of the fate which she may be pleased to assign to Germany. In fact, the question

is not, how much you will give for peace, but how much disgrace you will suffer at the outset, how much degradation you will submit to as a preliminary? In these circumstances, then, are we to persevere in the war with a spirit and energy worthy of the British name and of the British character; or are we, by sending couriers to Paris, to prostrate ourselves at the feet of a stubborn and supercilious government, to do what they require, and to submit to whatever they may impose? I hope there is not a hand in his Majesty's councils that would sign the proposals, that there is not a heart in this house that would sanction the measure, and that there is not an individual in the British dominions who would act as the courier.

Mr. Pitt concluded with moving,

“ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to assure his Majesty, that that house also felt the utmost concern that his Majesty's earnest endeavours to effect the restoration of peace had been unhappily frustrated, and that the negociation, in which he had been happily engaged, had been abruptly broken off by the peremptory refusal of the French government to treat, except upon a basis evidently inadmissible, and by their having in consequence required his Majesty's plenipotentiary to quit Paris within forty-eight hours.

“ To thank his Majesty for having directed the several memorials and papers which had been exchanged in the course of the late discussion, and the account transmitted to his Majesty of its final result, to be laid before the house.

“ That they were perfectly satisfied, from the perusal of these papers, that his Majesty's conduct had been guided by a sincere desire to effect the restoration of peace, on principles suited to the relative situation of the belligerent powers, and essential for the permanent interests of his Majesty's kingdoms, and the general security of Europe: whilst his enemies had advanced pretensions at once inconsistent with those objects, unsupported even on the grounds on which they were professed to rest, and repugnant both to the system established by repeated treaties; and to the principles and practice which had hitherto regulated the intercourse of independent nations.

“ To assure his Majesty, that, under the protection of Providence, he might place the fullest reliance on the wisdom and firmness of his parliament, on the tried valour of his forces by sea and land, and on the zeal, public spirit, and resources of his kingdoms, for vigorous and effectual support in the prosecution of a contest, which it did not depend on his Majesty to terminate, and which involved in it the security and permanent interests of this country and of Europe.”

The House divided on an amendment moved by Mr. Fox, censuring the conduct of ministers in the negotiation :

For the amendment - - 37

Against it - - - - - 212

The address was then agreed to.

February 28, 1797.

MR. PITT moved the order of the day for taking into consideration the following message from his Majesty,

“ GEORGE R.

“ His Majesty thinks it proper to communicate to the House of Commons, without delay, the measure adopted to obviate the effects which might be occasioned by the unusual demand of specie lately made from different parts of the country on the metropolis.

“ The peculiar nature and exigency of the case appeared to require, in the first instance, the measure contained in the order of council, which his Majesty has directed to be laid before the House.* In recommending this important subject to the immediate and serious attention of the House of Commons, his Majesty relies with the utmost confidence on the experienced wisdom and firmness of his parliament, for taking such measures as may be best calculated to meet any temporary pressure, and to call forth, in the most effectual manner, the exclusive resources of this kingdom, in support of their public and commercial credit, and in defence of their dearest interests.

G. R.”

* See next page.

The message being read by the Speaker,

Mr. PITT rose:

Sir, I gave notice yesterday that I should first move an address to his Majesty, returning him thanks for his most gracious communication, and assuring him that the house would immediately proceed to take into consideration the object recommended in the message to their serious attention. I stated that my next motion would be for the appointment of a select committee to enquire into the amount of the outstanding engagements of the bank, and the means they had of making good their engagements. As with respect to my first motion, for expressing our thanks to his Majesty, and assuring him of our readiness to take immediate steps to comply with his recommendation, there can scarcely be

* Copy of the Order of Privy Council.

“ At the Council Chamber, Whitehall, February 26, 1797.

“ By the Lords of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council. Present.

The Lord Chancellor,	Earl Spencer,
Lord President,	Earl of Liverpool,
Duke of Portland,	Lord Grenville,
Marquis Cornwallis,	Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer.

“ Upon the representation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stating, that from the result of the information which he has received, and of the inquiries which it has been his duty to make respecting the effect of the unusual demands for specie that have been made upon the metropolis, in consequence of ill-founded or exaggerated alarms in different parts of the country, it appears, that unless some measure is immediately taken, there may be reason to apprehend a want of a sufficient supply of cash to answer the exigencies of the public service. It is the unanimous opinion of the board that it is indispensably necessary for the public service, that the directors of the Bank of England should forbear issuing any cash in payment until the sense of parliament can be taken on that subject, and the proper measures adopted thereupon, for maintaining the means of circulation, and supporting the public and commercial credit of the kingdom at this important conjuncture; and it is ordered, that a copy of this minute be transmitted to the directors of the Bank of England; and they are hereby required, on the grounds of the exigency of the case, to conform thereto until the sense of parliament can be taken as aforesaid,

(Signed)

W. FAWKENER.”

supposed to take place any difference of opinion, I will not in prefacing that motion detain the house any longer, but content myself with moving,

“ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return thanks for his most gracious message, and to assure him that the house would proceed, without delay, to the deliberation of the important subject, which his Majesty has recommended to their attention; and that his Majesty might rely on the earnest and anxious desire of the house to adopt such measures as may be best calculated to meet the pressure of any temporary difficulties, and to call forth at this present conjuncture, the extensive resources of the kingdom, in support of our public and commercial credit, and in defence of our dearest interests.”

Mr. Dundas seconded the motion, which was carried *nemine contradicente*.

Mr. PITT then proceeded:—

I suggested that it was also my intention this day to submit to the house a motion, that there should be appointed a select committee to make such enquiry into the state of the bank as might be conceived to be necessary, and to collect such information with respect to the circumstances of the time, as might be sufficient to point out the necessity of the measure adopted by the bank in consequence of an order of council, and at the same time justifying the members of that house in taking the proper steps to confirm and enforce that measure.

With respect to the first step to be ascertained, the state of the bank, that already has in a great measure been ascertained by the confidence of public opinion. Of this public opinion the most unequivocal and satisfactory proofs have been afforded, even within the short space that has elapsed since the minute of council has been issued. It has been clearly evinced that there is no doubt entertained with respect to the solidity of the bank to answer all the demands of its creditors. At this trying period that has called for the exertion of the good sense and the fortitude of Englishmen, their good sense, and their fortitude have been displayed in a way equally creditable to themselves, and auspicious to the

public welfare. But though there can be no hesitation with respect to the solidity of the bank, undoubtedly at so important a period, and under those critical circumstances which now require the interference of the house, it is incumbent upon them to take the proper means to satisfy themselves, that the measure which has been adopted in consequence of the opinion of council, was occasioned by unavoidable emergency, and had become indispensably necessary. It is the more incumbent upon them to institute this enquiry, and obtain the fullest conviction on this head, as it is proposed that parliament should now be called upon to confirm that opinion, and to sanction the measure by an act of the legislature. I am indeed confident that the result of the investigation will be such, as not only to leave no doubt that the security of the bank is as unquestionable, as it is unquestioned, but will completely establish the propriety of adding the public security to the security and property of the bank. With respect to the amount of the outstanding demands on the bank, and the means which they possess for discharging their obligations, I am satisfied that the enquiry will be comprised in a short compass, and that from the result of a very short investigation, the advantage of the measure already adopted will appear so obvious, as to lay the natural foundation of every further proceeding on the part of this house. It is proposed that the public security should be given, not only for the outstanding claims on the bank which exist at the present moment, but also for those additional issues of paper which may be deemed advisable.

There is, however, one point, which from the novelty and importance of the conjuncture, it is necessary should be well understood. As to the degree of satisfaction proper to be obtained with respect to the grounds of necessity on which the measure has been adopted, it must appear to every reflecting man that this is a subject of enquiry of so critical and delicate a nature, that it cannot, consistently with public safety, be pushed to great particularity or minuteness of detail. It cannot be doubtful to any man acquainted with the subject, that it would be highly improper for the committee to enter into a

minute and particular enquiry into the precise state of the different descriptions of specie belonging to the bank, to proceed to a dissection of their accounts, and to state the balance of cash. These are circumstances that could not be disclosed without great imprudence, and the risk of permanent inconvenience. It must be evident that the enquiry ought to be conducted in the most discreet manner, consistently with the object of procuring the information necessary for the satisfaction of the house. It must be felt that so novel a measure would not in the first instance have been adopted without a strong conviction of its necessity. It would be proper, then, that the business be confided to a secret committee, and that they be expressly instructed by the house not to push their enquiries too minutely into the particulars I have suggested, but to confine their investigation to such circumstances of the general state of the bank, as may be sufficient for the purpose in view. My object, therefore, is to move for the appointment of a committee to ascertain the general state of the funds and obligations of the bank, to examine into the grounds of the necessity of the measure already adopted, and to suggest what further measures ought to be taken by parliament in pursuance of the minute of council. It is not for me to point out in what manner the members of that committee ought to exercise the important trust confided to them by the house: but if it should be proved by the evidence of the members of the bank direction, that the extent of the late demands upon the bank, and the rapidity with which they were brought forward, were likely to occasion such a pressure as not to leave a sufficient fund for the public service, and that their opinion in this respect entirely coincided with the opinion of his Majesty's ministers; a strong argument will surely then be afforded that the measure, which the necessity of the times required on the part of the executive administration, it is incumbent on the legislature to confirm and enforce. This is the only point on which the committee are called upon to inquire, or which it can be important for them to establish; and in pursuing this object of investigation,

they are by no means called to push their enquiries into circumstances, the disclosure of which would be attended with temporary injury to the credit of the country, and with permanent embarrassment to the operations of the bank. On these grounds I am desirous to rest the motion, which I shall now submit to the house. The motion is to the following effect,—

“ That a committee be appointed to examine and state the total amount of outstanding demands on the bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same, and to report the result thereof to the house, together with their opinion of the necessity of providing for the confirmation and continuance of the measures taken, in pursuance of the minute of council, on the 26th instant.”—

Some remarks which fell from Sir William Pulteney and Mr. Hussey, in the course of the debate, induced Mr. PITT to reply:—

He said, he had been called upon so immediately by the honourable baronet, and the gentleman who had just sat down, that he hoped for the indulgence of the house while he made a few observations, which were the more necessary as so much misconception was evident in the manner in which the subject had been taken up. The honourable baronet was alarmed at the way in which the proposal was conceived, as it implied that the measure was to be permanent. He could assure the house, however, that nothing could be farther from his intention. So much the contrary, that he had not the smallest objection that a limited time should be fixed; and the words from which the conclusion of its continuation was inferred, had been introduced solely in this view. The measure which it had been judged proper to take, and which had given rise to the order of council, was one, however, which, while it continued, ought to have the sanction of legislative authority. This was the reason which urged him to simplify and to accelerate the inquiry upon which the house was called upon to decide. It was a measure which required the utmost promptitude. Whatever inquiries it might be afterwards thought advisable to pursue; whatever retrospect of past events might be made, and whatever

remedies might be suggested by a general consideration of future contingencies, the present measures required an investigation less extensive, and a decision more expeditious. The question for the house at present was, whether they wished a measure which was conceived necessary, to remain so long as the extended inquiry would demand, without the sanction of legislative authority? If they were of opinion that, in the present circumstances, it would not be proper to leave it without that sanction, they ought to narrow the inquiry.

With respect to the causes which produced the necessity of the measure, opinions would be as different as the sentiments of individuals. He was ready to say, however, that the Austrian loan, though one of the causes which might influence the great events which operated on our situation, was not the immediate cause to which the necessity was to be ascribed. Was it necessary to go into so extensive a field of inquiry to ascertain whether a specific measure, already found necessary, was to be sanctioned for a limited time by legislative authority? The inquiry which was most practicable was certainly at present that which was most prudent. The causes which may have contributed to produce this situation, the remedies that may be applied to obviate its bad effects, and the means which may be adopted to prevent its taking place in future, were considerations undoubtedly of the highest magnitude and importance; but they were less urgent than the immediate inquiry he had proposed, because they might be postponed without inconvenience: they would afford room for calm and temperate deliberation: they would be discussed to greater advantage after a pause of reflection, and with the coolness of the understanding, instead of being taken up in the first ebullition of passion, and in the warmth of immature consideration. The honourable gentleman wished to know what was the cause of the measure which it was judged prudent to adopt. He would take the liberty to say, that the sudden drain upon the metropolis was unconnected with any circumstances which could infer either the deficiency of the bank, or the unprosperous situation of the

country. The rates of foreign exchanges never were more flourishing than at this moment. The necessity of the measure originated in a sudden demand beyond the usual average. With regard to the quantities of money exported, and the remittances received, it was a point which the house could ascertain by a motion of their own better than by any question put to him. This run might have occasioned a demand, which, when connected with the alarm which prevailed, would have produced the worst effects, and reduced the country to a very dangerous situation. The short question for the house, however, was, to prove the reality of the situation which had produced the order of council. The causes would be so differently viewed according to political and commercial opinions of men, that they more properly belonged to future discussion. The inquiry immediately relating to the point before the house was urged in the first instance by every consideration of public interest and public duty.

With regard to the observation of the honourable gentleman, "pay the bank what they have advanced, and they will be able to answer all the demands," it was founded entirely on mistake. Did the honourable gentleman imagine that the bank advanced their specie to government; or that he, with rapacious hand, had seized upon so much money as he had mentioned? By far the greater part of that sum was floating advances, not now made for the first time; nor was there more now outstanding than had been upon many occasions before he came into office. The advances were commonly made in notes, and paid in the same manner; unless the bank had no other advances but those to government, and unless these occasioned an issue of their paper, inferring a demand for specie which otherwise would not have taken place, it could not be said that the advances to government could in any view produce the difficulties of the bank for cash. It was not impossible that, upon some future occasion, a loan might be required, for the purpose of taking up these floating advances; but, did the honourable gentleman conceive that such a loan could be in specie? This was not the

moment, in the midst of these embarrassments, to propose such a loan; and, though it were transacted, it could not supply the bank with a single additional guinea in cash. Surely it would not be proposed to give up the inquiry into the measure which he had brought forward, and, instead of it, require him to borrow money for such purposes, and with such expectations as this.

The honourable gentleman supposed that taxes were paid in specie, and that the public creditor, on the other hand, was not to be paid at all. The public creditor, however, like every other person, often received notes instead of cash. Upon such a question as this, it was proper to look at general usage. It was a fact well known, that loans were often advanced without any expectation of being paid in specie; nor could the bank ever have it in contemplation, that every quarterly dividend was to be paid in cash; nor did they form their arrangements upon that supposition. All the receipt of the revenue paper was taken in the same manner. The observations of the honourable gentleman were entirely founded in mistake; and, as he hoped he was guided by motives of candour, he would be aware of the false grounds on which he had formed his conclusions. He should repeat, therefore, that the inquiry which was necessary to be entered upon at present was comprehended in his original proposal: whatever went beyond that object might, with much greater advantage, be referred to a future opportunity.

Mr. Sheridan then moved, as an amendment to the motion, "That the committee should inquire into the causes which produced the order of council of the 26th instant."

The amendment was negatived,

Ayes - - - - - 86

Noes - - - - - 244

and the original motion was afterwards agreed to.

March 9, 1797.

THE House having resolved itself into a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the reports of the Committee of Secrecy, appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Bank,

Mr. PITT expressed himself as follows :

I rise in consequence of the notice which I gave on a former day of my intention to make some propositions on the present state of public affairs, grounded on the reports of the secret committee appointed to inquire into the affairs of the bank, and the necessity of providing for the continuance of the operation of the order in council of the 26th of February last. These reports relate to two distinct points—the state of the funds of the bank, and the necessity of continuing the restriction by which the issue of specie is at present suspended. With respect to the first point, there undoubtedly appeared from the beginning of the discussion an almost universal persuasion of the solidity of the funds of that corporation. It was the opinion of those who were most interested in its concerns, and it was readily adopted by persons more immediately conversant in pecuniary transactions, who evinced the sincerity of their confidence by the measures which they at first adopted, and the line of conduct they have since pursued. The report of the select committee confirmed the general impression respecting the stability of its resources ; and never till this day have I heard them questioned.* That their assets greatly exceed all demands which can be made on them cannot be disputed.

The only part of the honourable gentleman's† speech on which I find myself called upon to make any observations, was that in

* Mr. Sheridan had previously risen to give notice of his intention to move on the next day, that immediate steps should be taken to pay the money advanced by the Directors of the Bank to Government.

† Mr. Sheridan.

which he denied that the eleven millions due from government to the bank formed any part of its funds. The fact is, the sum of eleven millions is the original capital of that corporation. The security of every trader is the original capital that he has embarked in trade; to deny therefore, that the original capital of the bank, if it still remains unimpaired and secure, is part of their assets, is to deny every mercantile principle upon which security is constructed, or trade carried on. When we look at the ultimate solidity of the funds of the bank (and it is to their ultimate solidity that, at present, we ought to look), we must look at their original capital, at the amount of their good debt, in short, at every species of property which is available for the liquidation of their outstanding demands. The honourable gentleman seems in his ideas to have confounded the amount of the property of the bank with another question wholly distinct from this; how far the bank has carried on an advantageous trade. If we were to consider this question, the original capital could not certainly be brought into the account of gain. If the capital was diminished, then they would have lost by their trade, and if it was increased, they would have gained, but the capital in its original state could not be placed in the account of gain. This is a question, however, quite foreign to the present subject of discussion. It forms no part of our inquiry, for we have nothing to do with the internal economy of the bank. Considering it as a corporation, it is sufficient for the public to know that it is a rich corporation, and that, were it now to close its accounts, it could divide among the holders of stock a sum considerably larger than the capital which they originally embarked in the firm. The honourable gentleman contends that this debt of eleven millions is not demandable from government by the bank, and that it ought only to be considered as the principal of a three per cent. annuity. But if government found that the bank was unfit for business, would it continue in its hands the monopoly of a business which it cannot manage?—and whenever this monopoly is taken from them, this sum of eleven millions must be repaid. The object of inquiry was to ascertain the ultimate

solidity of the bank. Its ultimate solidity is asserted in the report of the secret committee upon your table; and so far from being liable to any of the animadversions of the honourable gentleman in the inquiry, the committee would not have done their duty had they not included this eleven millions among its assets. This is a part of their debt, which rests upon the best possible security, because it rests upon the aggregate powers of the country. The report of the committee then confirms the opinion of the stability of the bank; an opinion in which I had formerly the satisfaction of hearing every person concur, and which even the honourable gentleman himself expressed most decidedly, when the business was under discussion on a former day. But the inquiry into the state of the funds of the bank is nearly connected with the question of the general policy of suspending for a time its payments in specie. A suspension of these payments is a step which certainly ought not to be taken, excepting in a case of the most urgent necessity. If this necessity, however, at present exists, and, after the report of the secret committee it cannot admit of doubt, we must submit to the adoption of a measure, which certainly it would be desirable in other circumstances to avoid, not however without the important consolation that, notwithstanding the temporary embarrassments arising from a combination of causes afterwards to be inquired into, there are funds amply sufficient for the security of those who cannot have their demands satisfied for a time.

When I come to consider the second report, with all due respect for the committee, I must own that I lament exceedingly, their having confined themselves within narrower limits than what I understood to be the province of their inquiry. We had formerly some discussion upon the difficulty of discriminating precisely between the existence of the necessity and the cause by which it has been produced, and perhaps it is impossible to draw the exact line between them. But without entering at all into minute distinctions, plain sense teaches us that there is a difference between an event and its cause. And when a committee was appointed to inquire into the necessity of the bank suspending

its payment in specie, I did conceive that they would have inquired into the necessity of taking, as well as of continuing, the measure. They have only reported, however, upon the necessity of continuing it, without expressing any opinion upon the propriety of having adopted it. But according to this report, it now appears to be necessary. I admit that it may have become necessary, merely in consequence of having been adopted; in reasoning therefore upon its continuance, I shall not consider the reports as sanctioning the issue of the order in council. I cannot read the report, however, without believing it to have been the opinion of the committee, that the continuance of its operation is necessary for a time; for what time is another question: I certainly feel the necessity of it on very different grounds than because it has once been taken; but all I wish now is, that the house will proceed upon the recommendation of the committee.

What may be the proper time for continuing it, and how far it may be proper to entrust government with the power of shortening the definite time that may be fixed, or how far it may be wise to leave it to their discretion to prolong the period of its operation, if it should be necessary beyond that definite time, will be matter for discussion in the progress of the bill. I shall now only move, that the chairman be directed to move for leave to bring in a bill, to continue and confirm the order in council of the 26th of February, for a time to be limited. The house will feel that, by agreeing to this motion, they will sanction the prohibition with their legislative authority, and the consequent propriety of extending their protection at the same time that they extend their authority. It will be easily seen that I allude to a bill of indemnity to those who upon their own responsibility issued an order, which certainly was illegal, and could only be justified by the urgent necessity of the moment. I am aware that it does not yet appear, whether ministers ought or ought not to be indemnified, nor do I think that this is the proper time for such a discussion, because parliament cannot form any judgment of a measure professing to have been taken on necessity,

till the existence of that necessity is ascertained. The honourable gentleman* has thrown out some doubts respecting the necessity of continuing the measure, and these doubts are founded upon the necessity of adopting it. But, I understood that it was decidedly the sense of the house, that the necessity of adopting as well as of continuing the measure, was a subject proper only for discussion in a secret committee; for surely the necessity of taking the measure was a question of as great delicacy, and in the agitation of which as much caution ought to be observed, as the necessity of continuing it. Since then the subject can come with propriety only before a secret committee, I hope I shall be excused from debating it on the present occasion.

But the honourable gentleman brings his arguments nearer to the present subject, when he maintains that, were government to discharge the debts they owe to the bank, this would do away the necessity of adopting or rather of sanctioning the present measure. I am here entitled to assume that at least he must see things in a different point of view from the committee, since this naturally came within the province of their inquiry, and has not been suggested by them as a measure adequate to meet the necessity of the times. But with respect to the measure itself, I shall not pretend to say, how far it may not be applicable in future as a remedy for some of those evils which may have contributed to produce the present necessity; all I will maintain, and it is enough for my present purpose, is, that it is not a measure at all calculated, even supposing that could be instantly executed, to operate as a remedy for the difficulties of the moment. But the honourable gentleman did not recollect that a measure of the nature that he proposes, requires considerable previous arrangement; that it must be subject to meet discussion, and that a great deal of time must necessarily elapse before it can take effect. The remedy then which he suggests is a proof itself, that in the interval, the measure which has been already taken, ought to be continued. He expresses a hope, that I will not be so childish

* Mr. Sheridan.

as to deny, that were government to pay the debts they owe to the bank, it would not operate as a relief to that corporation, because it would not be paid off in cash. Now, Sir, it is very easy to apply this or any other epithet to this or any other argument, and it would be very easy for me to apply the same epithet to a contrary opinion, and leave the house to judge between us ; but notwithstanding the epithet, I will venture to assert that though government were to pay all the debt they owe to the bank, it would not go to alter the quantity of cash. And if the object be to re-establish a due proportion between the cash and the notes of the bank, I will put it to any mercantile man in the house, whether this can be done without increasing this cash, but merely by taking their notes out of circulation. A considerable reduction of notes may be wise, but to pay off all the debt due by government to the bank is neither practicable within a short time, nor, even though it were practicable, would it have the desired effect. The first motion, therefore, which I shall propose is, that the operation of the order in council shall be continued under the authority of a committee of the legislature for a time to be limited ; and if this motion is agreed to, I shall then propose that the same committee shall be revived, in order to inquire into the necessity of taking the measure, and also to investigate the causes which gave rise to that necessity.

There is another motion of which I gave notice, and which I shall certainly take an early opportunity of submitting to the house, namely, that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the whole state of the finances of the country. Steps cannot be taken too soon to ascertain and put upon record every thing that relates to the real situation and resources of the country ; and in that prospect I shall only say that I entertain the most sanguine hopes that, however severely we may feel the pressure of present difficulties, whatever difference of opinion may prevail respecting the conduct of government, and however much the nation may feel from the variety and weight of its burdens, the wealth of the country is great, and that it still possesses a vast extent of solid

resources. I wish most earnestly that this inquiry may extend as far as, consistently with propriety and a due regard to the public service, it can be carried. It is my desire that it may embrace the whole amount of the burdens incurred since the commencement of the war, and the means provided for defraying them ; the whole amount of the burdens that may be necessary for the present year, accompanied with the examination of the measures which have been taken for the reduction of the national debt, together with a scrutiny into the public expenses, with a view if possible to abridge them, consistently with the interests of the public service. I would caution gentlemen, however, against rashly deciding upon the possibility of this reduction, before they inquire whether the service performed can either be dispensed with or purchased at a cheaper rate. On these grounds I shall move, " that the chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in a bill to confirm and continue the order in council of the 26th of February, for a time to be limited."

The motion was carried without a division.

Mr. PITT then moved :

" That the secret committee for inquiring into the affairs of the bank, be revived, and that it be referred to the same secret committee to inquire into the causes which had produced the order of council, and to report their opinion of the necessity of that measure."

Upon which the committee divided,

Ayes - - - - - 174

Noes - - - - - 65

March 13, 1797.

On a motion by Mr. Harrison, " That the extent of the supplies voted to Government, since the commencement of the present war, having caused so heavy an increase of taxes, it is the duty of this House to inquire whether

some relief to the burdens of the people, or provision for further expense, may not be obtained by the reduction of useless places, sinecure offices, exorbitant fees, and other modes of retrenchment in the expenditure of the public money,"

Mr. PITT spoke to the following effect :

Sir—Though the honourable mover, and the noble lord* who seconded the motion, have thought proper to enter into considerations, which so far from exactly applying to the subject before the house, go a very great extent beyond it, it is not my intention to enter minutely into objects so completely unconnected with the present motion, and which we may have many opportunities of discussing. It seems to me unnecessary to trouble the house with any allusions either to the origin, or conduct of the present war ; or to take a review, or enter into a justification of the great and various questions which have been frequently agitated here. The noble lord has in his speech thought fit to condemn the measures adopted by the last parliament, for the preservation of the internal tranquillity of the kingdom, and the security of the state. But, Sir, the precautionary measures to which he has adverted were not, as he has been pleased to declare, retrenchments of the constitution, but essential safeguards against lawless attacks levelled at the British constitution by a faction, which, though small, was acting with the common enemy, and was openly proceeding not on British, but on French principles. The safety of the state at that time depended on the wise and just precautions which it was found necessary to take ; and though I feel that any review of these transactions is foreign to the question on which we are called to decide ; yet I trust I may be allowed to notice the manner in which the noble lord has referred to those measures which were calculated to oppose any check to the progress of French principles. He has, Sir, taken great pains to reprobate the proceedings of parliament on that momentous occasion, and the speech which he has delivered in support of his honourable friend's motion relates so little to the subject of it, that it appears to have been prepared for another

* Lord William Russell.

purpose, of which notice has been already given. [Mr. Pitt alluded to Mr. Fox's notice of moving for the repeal of the treason and sedition bills.] But as these measures have been fully discussed and resolved by parliament, I cannot, until this house feels convinced of their error, suppose that they have agreed to improper proceedings. While their resolutions on those subjects stand on record, I am authorised in assuming, that they have acted on principles of public order against principles of anarchy and confusion; that they have supported the cause of true liberty against the ravages of licentiousness; that they have protected religion and morality against the desperate attempts of destructive innovation, and that they have preserved our constitution inviolate from the bold and daring attacks of a faction acting in concert with the common enemy of freedom, and of public and private happiness. So far, Sir, I conceive I have an undisputed right to argue on the solemn decision of this house. With respect to the manner in which the honourable gentleman has opened his motion, I am led to observe, that he has not entered into any specific grounds to support it. He has confined himself to very general statements, and he seems to have reserved himself for a particular detail on some other opportunity.

The honourable gentleman appears, from the words of his motion, to have two different objects in view. The first relates to making retrenchments, and correcting profusion in the established offices of government, and in sinecure places and pensions. The second has for its object an inquiry into the state of the national expenditure, and proposes a check on the expenses of the state. This, it is needless for me to urge, is comprehended in a resolution which has already passed this house, to inquire into the finances of the country, and to consider of the most practicable means for obtaining a diminution of the public expenditure. The honourable gentleman means to include in the investigation which he proposes, subjects of the most extensive and complicated nature. He wishes to embrace all the ordinary and extraordinary expenses of the different branches of government. He extends his inquiry into the dis-

bursements of the army, navy, and every public establishment. I am ready to admit, that as far as this proposition goes, it forms a subject worthy the consideration of the house; and the magnitude of it appears to be such, that no man can say what will be the effect of it, or to what particular measures it may lead. Yet, Sir, the honourable gentleman, bringing before the house considerations of such extensive views, and of such high importance, adopts a very singular mode of proceeding. He does not think proper to offer matters so momentous and complicated in their relations in a direct manner to parliamentary discussion, but states them as the objects of a collateral inquiry, and introduces them immediately after his motion for retrenchment in the offices of government. But certainly the honourable gentleman will not deny that there is an extreme difference between both objects: for the check which he proposes on the public expenses very much exceeds in importance that reform which he wishes should take place in the establishment and salaries of public offices. The distinction between these two objects being so evident, as the latter does not form any part whatever of the proposition formerly submitted to the house by the honourable gentleman, nor of the notice which he gave of his motion of this night, I must consider the manner of introducing it not only irregular, but inadequate to the magnitude of the inquiry which he proposes to establish. I also think it necessary to remind gentlemen, that the objects which it comprehends, form the grounds of my motion for the appointment of the committee which has been this night chosen by ballot. I stated in general terms, previous to my bringing forward that motion, the various points to which the attention of the committee was to be directed; but I could not, until I had appointed that committee, proceed to offer, in a specific manner, each of these points. I therefore only stated, that it was my wish and desire to move, as an instruction to the committee, that after inquiring into, and ascertaining the whole state of the finances of the country; after reviewing the whole amount of the debt which had been incurred during the war; after investigating

the provision which had been made to meet it; after considering the probable amount of the total expense of public service for the whole of the year 1797, and the sums now applicable for defraying it;—I say, Sir, after taking these steps, it was also my intention to move that further instruction should be given to the committee to exercise a full power in forming and digesting a plan for controlling the public expenditure, and to inquire into, and report upon, the best and most practicable means for obtaining a diminution thereof. I therefore, Sir, am not a little surprized, after stating these measures in general terms—measures which I contend have been sanctioned by the unanimous concurrence of the house, in consequence of the appointment of the committee for the professed and acknowledged consideration of those very objects, that the honourable gentleman should now bring forward a motion to the same end, and without any previous notice whatever. The instruction for the committee, the nature of which I had thus before stated in general terms, I held in my hand ready to move, when the honourable gentleman brought forward his motion; for I certainly did not think any new proposition on the same subject could be urged, after an express declaration of my desire that the most speedy and effectual measures should be taken, which went to retrench the great and heavy expenses of war, and were of infinitely superior magnitude to any diminution that might be expected in the salaries of the public offices.

Without entering at this moment into a particular discussion, whether there exist any specific grounds to authorize the house to proceed to a reduction of useless offices, or to a retrenchment of profuse salaries, I can only say, that it is not my wish to oppose an inquiry to that effect. But I feel I shall not do my duty to the house and the public, if I were to agree to any other examination than that which I have proposed, and which has received the concurrence of the house. The honourable gentleman has, however, neglected many important, and, indeed, necessary considerations in suggesting his motion. He seems, in the first place, to have been unmindful that the

limits of the proposed reduction should be expressly declared. He next forgets, that the steps which have been already taken to effect the same end, should be submitted to the consideration of parliament, as a guide to direct their measures; and above all, that no ill-founded hope may be raised without fully looking into the subject on which the decision is to be formed. If it can appear that retrenchment, both in the number and expense of public offices, is calculated to promote the public service, I am convinced there is no man in this house that will oppose it. But the question now before us is, what are the specific grounds on which the honourable gentleman brings forward his motion? It is incumbent on him to point out, in a decisive manner, abuses which are said to exist in the performance of duties, or in payments for services which are not done for the public. I know, Sir, how very easy it is to give credit out of doors to the reports of abuses in sinecure places and pensions; but I really believe it is a subject as much mistaken as any other of a public nature. I therefore think, in whatever way the inquiry may terminate, that it will not be of much utility. If it can be shewn that there are strong grounds for correcting abuses, much may be gained for the public good; but if, on the contrary, it shall appear that there are no specific grounds to warrant a strong measure of that kind, and that the idea of the prevalence of abuses in the offices of the state is erroneous, much also is gained by removing an opinion, which might otherwise diminish the national confidence. Offices of very different descriptions come within the honourable gentleman's motion: the first which present themselves to notice are absolutely necessary, and in respect to them the inquiry fairly stated is, whether or no the number of offices is more than the different duties of them require; and secondly, whether the reward for the exercise of the various talents and industry necessary for the due execution of them is too great? It might also form a most important consideration, whether the same talents, the same diligence, and perseverance, at present employed in the performance of the duties annexed to these

offices, might not be rewarded in an equal or superior manner, were they applied to and exerted in the ordinary pursuits of life? I have, Sir, no hesitation in saying, that it is an unjust idea to imagine, that the abilities and labour devoted to the service of the public should not be paid as well, and to the full as liberally by the public, as those which are applied in private life to the interest of individuals, and which are rewarded by individual compensation. Next to the offices which I have noticed, and which must be viewed in a necessary light, I come to those which relate to state duties. Many of them are attended with considerable expense for the maintenance of the relative duty they should hold to the high ranks in life of those, near whom they are placed. If we look into the various offices connected with the army, the navy, and the revenue, we shall find, that the wages they receive are not higher than those they might earn by an equal exertion in private life, from individuals; and, therefore, Sir, the real state of the question appears to be, whether they are paid in a larger way by the public, than they would be by particular persons, for the performance of equal services. I only state this, that gentlemen may turn it in their minds, and not be induced to take up the matter in a general view. There are unquestionably offices of another description—of less business and with fewer duties attached to them; but I think it necessary to observe, that they arise out of our ancient manners, and are, in fact, the remnants of former times, attached to the splendour of Majesty, and attendant on the dignity of monarchy. I am not inclined to say what should be the exact sum for duties of this kind. I only maintain, that such offices have ever existed; and such has been the custom of all countries which have been governed by monarchs. This custom has been interwoven in our constitution, and forms an appendage to our mixed government; not for the display of idle parade; not for the loose gratification of idle vanity, but sanctioned by the authority of our ancestors, and continued for the dignified consistency of appearance in the king of a great and free people. Having noticed this branch

of public duties, I shall only observe, that though not included in the first class, they should notwithstanding be considered as connected with your constitution of mixed monarchy. Another description of offices is of a more invidious nature than any I have yet mentioned. I allude to sinecure places, which, notwithstanding the ridicule and severity with which they may be commented on by some gentlemen, are capable of being looked at with the eye of reason. I shall, Sir, shortly state the principles on which they stand. They stand on the invariable custom of this country; they are recognized by the solemn decisions of parliament. It will not, I trust, be denied, that the fair principle of honourable remuneration has ever been held a sacred consideration. It will not, I hope, be contested, that a provision and retreat for a life devoted to the public service, has ever been deemed a just and irresistible motive for conferring permanent rewards.

The question then presents itself, whether, at the instant when one common sweep is designed, to remove all offices in which actual duty is not performed, remuneration for actions done in the service of the state is a wise, a just, and an useful principle? Another inquiry will naturally arise, and that is, whether the mode in which they are distributed is more liable to abuse than any other? In the consideration of this question, I will not confidently maintain that the first principle of remuneration may not sometimes be misapplied, as it frequently depends on chance, discretion, and various causes, which it is unnecessary for me to enumerate. It may also be objected, that it cannot be ascertained by a precise rule how to reward precise merit. But then, Sir, I say, can any other method more efficacious, more independent of abuses, and less liable to errors, be adopted? Can any other mode be pointed out in which chance and discretion are to be completely laid aside? Suppose, Sir, for a moment, that even an application to parliament should be made the constitutional way of bestowing this kind of rewards; can it be imagined that such a proceeding would pro-

duce less complaint and murmurs than the present way in which they are conferred? I beg, therefore, gentlemen will not conclude, because there may be some offices connected with government which it may be wise to reform, that all are indiscriminately to be wiped away. I should imagine, that a correct and particular statement ought to be made of useless offices, and excessive salaries; that specific objections should be precisely stated, and thus, by pursuing an authentic detail, the house might be enabled to entertain a probability of the saving which could be made for the country. But, Sir, if without resorting to any of these indispensable measures, if without establishing a proper clue, which in the course of inquiry would lead to a just conclusion, you were to precipitate this business, I must contend, that instead of striving to meet the popular opinion, instead of serving the essential interests of the nation, you would, on the contrary, act in opposition to both, and even excite general discontent. In such a case, the house would not do justice to themselves, nor to their constituents. This is not, however, the first time you have been called on to interfere in similar considerations. The honourable gentleman brought forward, in the last parliament, a resolution of the same nature which he has this night proposed; and the event of it is fresh in every person's recollection. In a former parliament, a plan, which contained a particular detail, which furnished a full statement of the grounds of the application, and which went to a general economical reform, was brought forward by a right honourable gentleman,* who is no longer a member of this house; yet parliament, at that period, and in an hour of confessed necessity, with every possible authority before them, with every document which a well-digested and a judiciously-executed plan could furnish, with the report of the commissioners invested with powers to examine into the various branches comprehended in the proposed reform,—I say, Sir, parliament, with all these authorities before them, which the most exalted talents, or the most minute investigation, could supply, proceeded in a very cautious and limited manner. They

* Mr. Burke.

abolished some offices, and reduced the value of others; but they did not allow themselves to extend their reform beyond a prudential and constitutional line of conduct; and what cannot be too closely attended to, they effected no change nor modification whatever, without the aid of incontrovertible evidence, and the assistance of positive fact. They wisely lopped off whatever was proved to be superfluous, and they made reductions to the amount of many thousand pounds. To them were added savings by the commissioners of his Majesty's treasury, which were confirmed by the vote of parliament. But when they came to investigate the offices held under the exchequer, and proceeded to take into their consideration the nature of the tenure by which sinecure places were held, they did not think fit entirely to lop them off. The tellers of the exchequer, and several other offices, were retained and recognized by the resolution of parliament as necessary to be continued. Such was the opinion of the right honourable gentleman who proposed the reform, and such were the sentiments even of some gentlemen whom I now see over against me. A considerable reduction was then also effected in different offices of the customs, while some were entirely dropped; and, with respect to subordinate employments, large additional savings were made. I have now to observe, that, in all these retrenchments, the house proceeded on the general and acknowledged principle of remuneration for public services which I have already stated; and of such weight was that principle, that even Mr. Burke himself, though animated with the most enthusiastic zeal to carry his plan into execution, was on every occasion ready to recognize not only the wisdom, but the necessity of adopting it. I maintain, Sir, that sinecure offices are given in the nature of a freehold tenure. Parliament has expressly said, they will respect them as freehold property: and if, in answer to this solemn declaration, it is urged, that parliament may rescind their former resolutions, I say they may, by a parity of reasoning, destroy every kind of property in the country. But to

dwell any longer on this kind of argument would be too absurd to merit attention ; and I have only to observe, that we ought not to lose sight, even for an instant, of those grand principles which lead to, and are inseparable from, the administration of public justice. I repeat, Sir, it is my sincere and earnest wish, that the house should ascertain the particular offices which may be paid beyond the duties annexed to them, and beyond the trust and responsibility which attach to them. But until that great and necessary measure takes place, you cannot proceed to retrench or to lop off.

I must once more entreat the attention of the house, to the nature of the honourable gentleman's motion, and to the time in which it is proposed. The tendency of it is completely included in the instruction of which I have already given a general statement, and which I have given notice I should move for the direction of the committee, and it is brought forward at the very moment when a general investigation is set on foot with respect to the whole finance of the country, and with a view of ascertaining a plan for controlling the public expenditure. If therefore, Sir, it should be the opinion of the house to refer to the committee the subject of the honourable gentleman's motion, as part of the general inquiry with which it was intended they should be entrusted, it would be an easy matter, if the words of the instruction were thought too general, to introduce particular terms that might peculiarly specify it.

On these grounds I oppose the motion, convinced as I am, that were I to agree to it, the public could derive no benefit from it, and that I myself should become a party in the disappointment, and in the delusion of the people : I therefore move the previous question.

The previous question was carried,

Ayes - - - - - 169

Noes - - - - - 77

March 23, 1797.

Mr Fox, in pursuance of a previous notice, this day submitted to the House the following resolution :

“ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that his Majesty will be graciously pleased to take into his royal consideration the disturbed state of his kingdom of Ireland, and to adopt such healing and lenient measures as may appear to his Majesty’s wisdom best calculated to restore tranquillity, and to conciliate the affections of all descriptions of his Majesty’s subjects in that kingdom to his Majesty’s person and government.”

The motion being seconded by Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. PITT rose :

Sir—However generally the terms of the motion of the right honourable gentlemen are couched, for an address to his Majesty, it is utterly impossible for any man to form his judgment on the merits of it, unless by proceeding to separate it from the various and collateral topics which he has thought proper to introduce, and without which the proposed address would, in reality, be indistinct and unnecessary. He has, in the early part of his speech, developed a subject to which I most seriously desire to call the attention of the house. The right honourable gentleman, who has made a speech on the whole system of the Irish legislature, who has argued at large upon the principles and frame of it, who has considered in a very ample manner its aptitude to make laws, and who has gone at length into the disposition of the people, with respect to the practical effect of these laws, began by reminding us, when he stated to the House the discontents now existing in Ireland, that it was necessary to have recourse to that period when we recognized and fully established the complete independence of the Irish legislature, as it might be known whether we gave that independence as a boon or a right—whether that measure was a concession to Ireland. There is one certain point in which we must all coincide by having recourse to that period, and the truth of which the right honourable gentleman himself cannot controvert—that whether the establishment of the independence of Ireland was a concession or a

recognition on our part, it was putting Ireland in the absolute possession of independence in point of fact. He had himself, on former occasions, fully admitted and acknowledged that important truth, and to oppose it would tend to shake the authority of the parliament of Great Britain.

But, Sir, I beg leave to ask in what parliament of Ireland was it that he recognized the independence of the legislature of that country, and the necessity of which he then urged with so much force? Was it one formed on a more extensive frame than that which now exists? Did it include more persons attached to the Roman catholic interest of Ireland than it does now, or was it more calculated to give satisfaction at a time when concessions were not made in their favour, than now when such measures have actually taken place? Yet that very parliament, which existed at the period to which the right honourable gentleman has thought proper to have recourse, was conceived to be the national source of the most valuable blessings to Ireland. Surely he did not mean to say that, when he himself pressed forward in establishing the independence of Ireland, he was then only putting the people of that country in possession of a delusion, and that the legislature was incapable of conveying to the inhabitants of the country the enjoyment of practical liberty. The right honourable gentleman will not therefore now maintain, that, in the year 1782, he considered the parliament of Ireland so extremely defective in its frame and principles, that the nation could receive no essential benefit from the line of conduct then pursued by it; and if he will not say that, (and I am perfectly convinced he cannot say what would necessarily expose him to the charge of the most glaring inconsistency,) I am naturally led to inquire on what ground it now happens, that we are to come this day to vote an address for an alteration in the frame of that parliament, the superintendence of which we have entirely put out of our controul by the recommendation of the right honourable gentleman, and the independence of which we have unequivocally acknowledged? By what means will he make it appear, that, having renounced all power over the legislature of

Ireland, having formally abdicated the privilege which might have once existed, of enforcing any internal regulation in that country, having solemnly divested ourselves of all right, of whatever nature that right may have been, to make laws in any respect for Ireland; I say, Sir, by what particular means will he undertake to make it appear that it now remains for us to declare, what laws shall affect that country, and to dictate the precise modifications which he proposes to take place in the fixed principles of the legislature itself? In the year 1782, having given to Ireland a distinct and independent legislature, having, with every solid testimony of good faith, laid aside all pretensions to interference in the internal concerns of the nation, can any person now point out a subject to which Ireland should look with such well founded jealousy, as the subject presented to the consideration of the house by the right honourable gentleman's motion? I am ready to admit, that the address, proposed as it is, does not exactly say so; but, Sir, it conveys too much by implication, not to call for the attention of the house in a serious manner. Let us for a moment compare it with the speech of the mover, and if we proceed upon that just and reasonable ground, to which the right honourable gentleman himself can have no objection, as his speech forms the ground-work of his motion, it will in that case be found to convey what ought not to be stated in general terms, but expressed clearly and fairly.

The motion submitted to the house is, Sir, if I recollect right, for an address to his Majesty, that he will be pleased to take into his gracious consideration the present disturbed state of Ireland, and to adopt such healing and lenient measures as may restore it to tranquillity. But what can be the effect of such an address? Will it be maintained that the situation of Ireland has not been the frequent subject of his Majesty's thoughts? Can it with the shadow of propriety be urged, that the royal mind has been at any time exempt from those considerations which may best promote the happiness of his people? What then can be the object of the address? It proposes to his Majesty the propriety of adopting measures for the restoration of the tranquillity of his

subjects of Ireland. But such, Sir, must be his Majesty's disposition: and to what purpose will our advice tend? No man can presume to say, that such is not the firm desire, as it most undoubtedly is the interest, of the executive government. During what part of his Majesty's reign has there appeared any mark of neglect to the interests of the people of Ireland? On the contrary, Sir, the most solid testimonies have been given of the sincerity of his intentions to promote the happiness of that country, not by promises, not by declarations, but by deeds and acts which have been received with grateful satisfaction by the whole nation. The most minute attention has been paid to the commerce, to the agriculture, to the manufactures of the country; and what was at the time considered as the most valuable measure, the independence of the legislature was recognized beyond a possibility of doubt. The whole has been one continued succession of concessions, and to such an extent, that during the present reign, they have exceeded all the preceding ones put together since the revolution.

But, Sir, if further concessions are demanded, if the object of the address consists in soliciting these concessions, I must contend, that while it does not precisely point out the particular measures, which are to be adopted, it is, in the general state in which it now stands, nugatory and superfluous. If, on the other hand, the address is compared with the right honourable gentleman's speech, which indeed must be viewed as the chief ground of the motion, I maintain that it would be absurd and impossible to express propositions any way conformable to the sentiments delivered in the course of that speech. In the first place, let us consider them politically. If they mean, that the lord lieutenant of Ireland is accountable for any misconduct during his administration of public affairs there, as the servant of the crown, and it shall be urged that the controul of abuses of that kind remains with this country, I answer to that—granted. If in another point of view they go, as was in a certain degree conveyed by the honourable baronet who seconded the motion, to arraign his Majesty's ministers for gross errors and crimes

committed in the government of Ireland, and to bring them to trial, I again answer—granted. But, if they are calculated to express and recommend measures which are not within the province of the executive government of Ireland, it is but fair and also necessary to ask, are these measures so recommended to be carried into execution by his Majesty, who is only a part of the legislative authority of Ireland, and what must seem still more extraordinary, are they to be so adopted by the desire of the parliament of Great Britain? I beg leave to demand, whether his Majesty is not bound to act in what concerns the internal regulation of Ireland, in consequence of the advice of the legislature of that country? Our assenting to the address would therefore be highly unconstitutional with respect to Ireland, and we could not for a moment entertain such an idea, without being guilty of an unjustifiable interference in the duties of the legislative and executive government of that nation. Such, Sir, is the real ground on which I oppose the address.

There certainly have been many other collateral topics brought forward, with which the right honourable gentleman has judged it proper to embellish his speech, but which do not apply to the question, and the discussion of which may do much mischief, without producing one single advantage. I will not, therefore, enter into a review of all the various statements and arguments that have been used, nor will I declare whether the right honourable gentleman's assertions are right or wrong; but I will leave it to the justice and to the candour of the house to decide, whether any one point he has this night proposed, can be carried into effect by any other means than by the voice of the Irish legislature? I must also observe, that he has, in the course of his speech, gone into a long historical narrative, and has attempted to shew, that the Irish legislature is so framed as not to be adequate to perform its functions for the practical happiness of the people; that the principles on which it acts are radically defective, and that while it remains in its present state, the nation, or at least the majority of the nation, cannot enjoy the essential blessings of a free constitution. In answer to this, Sir, I must

beg leave to direct the attention of the house to the great and important consideration, that the parliament of this country has completely recognized, and solemnly established the independence of that of the kingdom of Ireland, which is as entirely distinct and as incapable of being controuled by us, as we are independent of them. Yet the right honourable gentleman proposes an interference in the internal concerns of those who now have as much right to dictate to us, as we can possibly have to prescribe rules of conduct to them. Does it, Sir, become us now to say, that they are not qualified to act for the good of the people of Ireland, and that they are not entitled to the confidence of their constituents?—We who told the same people upwards of fourteen years ago, that they were completely adequate to promote the public happiness, that they were framed to secure the prosperity of the country, and what cannot be too often stated, that they were unchecked by any external controul to deliberate and decide on the great business of legislation! If we speak thus to that parliament, (and such must be our language, if we give our assent to the address moved this night) I confess, Sir, it does appear to me the most extraordinary and singular line of conduct that can be adopted by one independent parliament against another independent parliament.

But allowing, for the mere sake of argument, that we are authorized to dictate in the manner proposed by the honourable gentleman, is it reasonable that we should proceed in the way he has pointed out on the bare suggestions which he has stated to the house? Should we, supported by assertions alone, assume the power, which by his motion he seems to suppose we possess, of watching over, and superintending the parliament of Ireland? With regard to what may be termed the practical part of the right honourable gentleman's speech, though it is very far from my wish to enter into a discussion of the various topics contained in it, yet I only follow him to shew, that, by agreeing to his proposition, however you disguise it by any specious name, however you gloss it over by any artful expression, you do nothing less than attempt directly to controul the legitimate au-

thority of the parliament of another country, and to trespass on the acknowledged rights of another distinct legislative power. But, taking the honourable gentleman's arguments in a different point of view—assuming for a moment that he has made out his case in an incontrovertible manner, and that he has fully proved to our satisfaction that the parliament of Ireland was, in the year 1782, in every respect competent to perform its functions, and is at this time directly the reverse, I wish to know what is the practical conclusion he draws from my admission; and in what manner does he propose to remove the evil which I thus suppose he has clearly made out? What remedy, Sir, does he attempt to point out? Does he give us a single idea to guide us in the execution of the task which he wishes to impose on us? It is our duty to inquire what the principles are on which he invites us to proceed; and what the precise limits are within which the subject is to be confined. With respect to these questions—and I trust every gentleman will readily allow them to be questions, not only of great importance, but of absolute necessity, the right honourable gentleman has left us entirely in the dark; and he appears so little impressed with the urgency of them, that he has not even hinted at them in the whole course of his speech.

Having, Sir, noticed the first point to which the honourable gentleman has called the attention of the house, I now come to the other parts on which his observations have been made, relative to the divided state and jarring interests of Ireland. He has first dwelt on the discontents of the Roman catholics; and in the next place he has described at some length the grievances of the protestants of the northern parts. He has, in the redress which he proposes to make to both sides, admitted, that concessions ought to be made to both parties; and from the statements of the right honourable gentleman, who thus wishes to reconcile opposite claims, I am confirmed in my opinion that he only desires, and is eager to effect an alteration in the frame of the parliament of Ireland, as far as it may arise out of the pretensions of the catholics, and out of the demands of the inhabitants of the north. And here, Sir, I feel myself called on to

notice the declaration made by the right honourable gentleman, that he would not enter into the particulars of the respective discontents of both parties, and yet he immediately after, notwithstanding that declaration, laid before the house a minute detail of circumstances on which I will not now dwell, thinking as I do, that a discussion of that nature is more calculated to inflame the minds of many than to prove of any essential service. When he came to mention the subject of religion, which has, according to his statements, produced many of the present discontents, he certainly did not seem very solicitous to preserve the church establishment, and though he does not wish to address the throne for the adoption of any particular line of conduct, it is something singular that he should recommend a measure that must affect a great mass of private property and even injure the church itself.

Not deeming it necessary to trouble the house any longer on these particulars, and convinced, as I am, that neither we nor the crown can interfere to effect that which exclusively belongs to the parliament of Ireland, I shall make a few observations on what has fallen from the right honourable gentleman with respect to the rights of which the Roman catholics are possessed, and also on the subject of those additional rights which it is his desire they should yet obtain. He observes that the catholics ought to have the general right of voting, of sitting in the legislative assembly, and of filling the public offices. To this, Sir, I answer, that they are in the actual possession of every other right, but that they certainly do not possess the right of voting for members of parliament, unless according to qualifications prescribed by law. This I conceive to be the mere state in which the catholics are placed. But, says the right honourable gentleman, enough has not been done to extend to them civil and religious liberties. Have not concessions of the most liberal kind been made to them since the revolution; and, during the present reign, has not every possible pledge been given to them of real affection and sincere zeal for their best interests on the part of the crown? But, Sir, it is curious to remark the detail which

the right honourable gentleman proposes, even admitting that the present subject is a proper one for us to recommend to the adoption of the executive government. In this detail there unquestionably arises an inconsistency, which he will find it no easy matter to do away. He first declares that he means to satisfy the catholics, by conferring on them the power of voting generally. But he immediately adds, that, by pursuing that measure, we shall not be able to give them any weight in point of political liberty; for, as he maintains that the elective franchise is so managed in Ireland, that it is entirely in the power of corporations to bestow or to withhold it, it would consequently be impossible for them to gain any material benefit, or to obtain any political influence, even if the law, which he himself wishes to be passed in their favour, were to take place. It therefore appears evident, that the remedy proposed by the right honourable gentleman himself, must be inadequate to meet the evil which he so seriously laments. And it naturally follows, as I have before had occasion to observe, that the great end of his plan is to alter essentially the whole frame of the constitution of the legislature of Ireland. In other words, Sir, the right honourable gentleman proposes an investigation and a scrutiny into the pretensions of the catholics of the south, and of the protestants of the north, for the express purpose of laying down what he considers to be just principles; and then the parliament of Ireland must be new modelled and revised, in consequence of his previous inquiry. But is it reasonable to call on the parliament of England to do that very thing which must not only be condemned by the parliament of Ireland, but is not entertained in the opinion of even a considerable number of persons? Yet, Sir, this question, which calls into doubt the existence of the whole constitution of Ireland, is to be brought forward on mere surmise, and without the shadow of authority. I say, it does not come within the constitutional right which we may possess, of controlling the executive government. It certainly does not come within the possibility of any right, which we can possess, of interfering in considerations which exclusively belong to a legislature totally separate from, and independent of us.

The other points which the right honourable gentleman has referred to, are lost, if possible, in more obscurity than that which I have just noticed. The various and clashing pretensions of the different parties are so extremely opposite, that it would be an arduous task to reconcile them. And if, in commending certain political principles which are acknowledged by the northerns, he has in his mind principles founded on the French doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, and intimately connected with those revolutionary tenets which have produced such vast mischiefs throughout Europe, I maintain, Sir, that it would be contrary to the duty of the parliament of Great Britain to entertain the motion of the right honourable gentleman, supported as it is by the speech which he has this night delivered. There are, Sir, none of his considerations on which we can prudently or safely pronounce; for there are none of them which may not excite such a flame as we shall never have it in our power to extinguish. They involve objects most delicate in their nature, and dangerous in their consequences. They embrace difficulties of a prodigious extent; and on which I shall not dwell, as they have been sufficiently described in the speech of the right honourable gentleman, so as to make us shudder with a just apprehension of the fatal and dreadful effects that must result from them. I must, therefore, Sir, consider the address proposed as a blind injunction, without any specific extent or means of execution. On this short ground I oppose the motion; and, with the conviction of the dangers that must arise from the adoption of it, with the solemn recognition of the independence of the parliament of Ireland, with a just sense of our duty that others may not in their turn be wanting to us, I cannot entertain a doubt but that the motion will be rejected by a considerable majority of the house;

The motion was rejected;

Ayes - - - - - 84

Noes - - - - - 220

April 4, 1797.

Mr. Sheridan, conformably to the notice he had given on a former day, called the attention of the House to the subject of making further advances to the Emperor of Germany; concluding his observations with moving the following resolution: "That the House will resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to inquire whether it is consistent with a due regard to the essential interests of this country, that, under the present circumstances, any further loans or advances should be made to his Imperial Majesty."

Mr. PITT rose, as soon as the motion was read:

The speech of the honourable gentleman, who has just sat down, varied so much from his motion, and there was so little resemblance with the opinions he advanced, and the proposition with which he concluded, that I find it extremely difficult to adopt a train of argument which will bear upon both at one time. The argument of the honourable gentleman, which he pretended to found upon a long detail of circumstances, in his opinion undeniable in point of fact, and certainly, if they are true, very serious in their nature, pointed to a conclusion, in which, he premised that the house would betray their trust to their constituents, if they did not join, and from which, if they ventured to dissent, he apprehended the most fatal consequences would ensue to the country. He stated the subject now under discussion, as one not to be hung up or suspended, not as one upon which information ought to be collected, and mature deliberation exercised before a decision was passed; but he described it with all that richness of imagery and aptness of allusion of which he is so much master; with even multiplied illustrations, as one on which a moment's delay ought not to be permitted, and on which to hesitate was to sacrifice the best interests of the nation. It was a case, according to him, in which patience led to death. I must observe, in setting out, however, that his analogies, however various and beautiful, were not very appropriate. He represented the absurdity of inquiring into the nature of the instrument by which a wound was inflicted, before bandages and styp-

tics were applied, and the insanity of waiting for the coroner's inquest upon a person drowned, before the means recommended by the humane society were used for his recovery. He forgot, however, that his motion, as calculated to operate upon the political malady of the state, did not correspond with the steps which ought to be taken in the first instance with a person wounded or drowned. In order to make the allusion accurate, his argument should have stated, that the continuance of remittances to the emperor would produce an inability in the bank to make good their money payments; or, supposing that inability to have just arisen, he should have shewn, that the measure recommended in his motion was the best which could be adopted to remove that inability. It so happens, however, unfortunately for the accuracy of his allusion, that money payments have been suspended at the bank for a considerable time; that an order of council was issued as the best remedy at the moment for the difficulties of the bank; that this suspension has been recognized by the house of commons; and that the legislature, anxious to devise the best mode of restoring the credit of that corporation by reinstating it in its former situation of solvency, has thought proper, as a fit preliminary to that deliberation, to appoint a secret committee to inquire into the causes of its embarrassments. This is the true state of the question.

The honourable gentleman, in his argument, represented his motion as essential to the very being of the bank, and of the country, and as one from which the house cannot withhold its assent without sealing their own reproach and infamy, by sacrificing every trust which has been delegated to them by the nation; and when the motion was read, it turned out to be nothing more than an ambiguous attempt to make them pronounce indirectly an opinion upon a subject, upon which they were not yet in possession of information sufficient to enable them to pass a fair and just decision. For though the case was of such a nature, as represented in his speech, that it could admit of neither doubt nor delay, his motion went to nothing more than the appointment of a committee to inquire into the circumstances connected

with it. Does the honourable gentleman mean that the house should now resolve itself into that committee, and report to-night? If this is his intention, where would be the candour of the proceeding in respect of those who wish for further information, and who are unwilling to deliver an opinion till that information is collected? If he does not mean that the house should now resolve itself into this committee, then I object to the motion as ambiguous, disingenuous, and uncandid, as capable from its nature of being understood two ways, and as tending to mislead the house upon the subject on which they are called upon to decide. The honourable gentleman knows, and the house must be aware, that every question which respects the disposal of the public money must be agitated in a committee of the whole house, so that whether the house may think it proper to give their sanction to the honourable gentleman's argument or not, it must be in a committee of that description which the subject will eventually come before, and in which their decision will be finally given. There is this difference, however, that at present they are not in possession of that degree of information which is necessary for them to decide upon a question of so much importance; whereas they will then have the materials before them, from which such information is to be collected. If the honourable gentleman contends that the information of which they are at present in possession, is sufficient to enable them to form a correct judgment of what ought, or of what ought not to be done, why does he not move them to come to an immediate decision without going into a committee at all? In short, it was as superfluous in one view, as it is inconsistent and contradictory in another. I should not think that the house will consider it to be their duty to sanction the opinions of the honourable gentleman, upon a view of their general policy and expediency, far less that they will decide upon a subject of so much importance, with the scanty means of information now in their power; but if they mean to comply with the real object of the motion and the true wishes of the mover, let them do it in a fair and manly way, and not by assenting to a motion as ambiguous in its nature as

perfidious in its designs. This much I thought it right to say upon the narrow shape of the motion; and having said so much upon the question immediately before the house, it is the less necessary for me to dwell long upon the train of argument which prefaced the proposition on which it turns.

Though I differ very considerably from the honourable gentleman on many of the topics on which he touched, I entirely agree with him on the general importance of the subject. I agree with him in thinking that it is connected not only with the fate of a great and powerful empire, but with the general fate and destiny of the world; but in proportion to its magnitude, ought to be the caution of this house in deciding upon it on narrow and confined principles. That these are domestic considerations which are highly momentous, I readily admit, but I would remind the house that there may be a narrow mode of looking at them. Without attending to the circumstance of our having a great and powerful enemy to contend with, flushed with success, and ambitious of conquest, with means of bringing into the field more numerous armies than perhaps ever were known, and without attending to the circumstance of our insular situation, which in time of war renders a continental diversion of great consequence to our external security; but considering it merely as a question to be decided upon the principles of economy, and calculating the effect, which granting pecuniary remittances to his imperial majesty at the present moment, has a tendency to produce upon public credit, upon the success of the war, and in accelerating the period and improving the terms of peace, I have no hesitation in pronouncing an opinion, that the result of this calculation will be, that this country, by sending pecuniary assistance to her magnanimous and faithful ally, will adopt the best mode of consulting real economy, of restoring public credit, of prosecuting the war, while war is necessary, with advantage, and of securing a speedy and honourable issue to the contest. Were the house therefore to be driven to a decision upon the subject, I should state this as my clear opinion; but by deferring that decision till they have the means of information more fully

before them, the influence of my opinion, I firmly believe, will be superseded by their own conviction, and on that account I am happy that the honourable gentleman does not mean to press it to an ultimate decision to-night. The more the subject is discussed, the fewer doubts will be left upon the minds of gentlemen of the propriety of the measure, and the more the circumstances of the case are investigated and analysed, the more will the opinion of its policy and utility be confirmed. As an opportunity for this discussion will hereafter occur, I do not think it necessary now to enter much at length upon the different topics connected with it. I shall, therefore, only say a few words on each of them.

In the first place let us try its merits as a measure of economy. And here I must remind the house that the honourable gentleman, by his own confession, does not bring forward the proposition as an indirect mode of forcing government to conclude a peace by disarming the country. The question therefore is, whether, as a mode of carrying on the war, the advantage which is likely to arise to this country from the co-operation of the emperor, secured by her pecuniary aid, is an equivalent for the temporary inconvenience which the public may sustain in consequence of sending these remittances? To estimate the advantages with the inconveniences is very difficult. But, in the outset, I must set right an assumption of the honourable gentleman respecting the difference of this country granting or withholding pecuniary assistance from her ally. The difference (which of itself is no small one) is not merely whether we are to carry on an offensive or defensive war: this is one consideration, but it is not the only one. The honourable gentleman may talk in as high terms as he will of French enthusiasm and French gallantry, but he cannot deny, at least he cannot in justice deny, an equal tribute of applause to Austrian valour and Austrian heroism. If we review the campaigns of the war, it is impossible to find in history instances of greater prowess in the soldier, of more accomplished talents in the general, or of more true magnanimity in the sovereign, than what they have exhibited. But the re-

sources of his imperial majesty are in such a situation, that with all his zeal to persevere in the contest, and all his honour in keeping his engagements with his allies, he cannot put the full force of his dominions in action without pecuniary assistance. Will any man then tell me that, if we cut off all hope of this assistance, he may not be able to persevere in his exertions? Will any man tell me that, if there were no military diversions created upon the Rhine or in the Tyrol, on the north or on the south of France, her numerous armies would not be employed in menacing our territory, and perhaps in invading our coasts? Or will any man tell me that if we withhold pecuniary assistance from the emperor, that refusal may not lead to a separate peace between Germany and France? The difference then is, not carrying on a defensive instead of an offensive war, but it is carrying on a war solely on your part, without any assistance to aid your efforts, or any diversion to divide the force of the enemy, instead of carrying on the war as at present, in conjunction with an ally whose exertions are able to resist the whole military power of France, while your fleets are occupied in protecting your trade and extending your foreign dominions. And do not the advantages which we enjoy, as they may be estimated from this short and simple statement, infinitely more than counter-balance any temporary inconvenience that we may sustain from the mode in which they are procured? The honourable gentleman took occasion to introduce the subject of a report from a secret committee of which he is a member, but which is not yet before the house. I should wish therefore, that the house will wait till the report is produced, and not repose implicit confidence in any of the statements made by the honourable gentleman. I do not know whether the peace establishment came under the enquiry or calculation of that committee. I rather think that it could not immediately come under their investigation. But whether it did or not, I am happy to assure the house that no such result, nor any thing approaching to it, will be found to arise out of a fair examination of the circumstances of the country.

But I find I am discussing the question on grounds, on which I ought not to object to it. Upon the train of argument which I was before pursuing, it is easy to shew that, if we do not intend to lay down our arms, if we mean to continue any method of exertion, if it be our wish to be in a situation to persevere in hostilities, if hostilities are necessary from the overbearing pride and unjust pretensions of the enemy, it cannot be a measure of economy to abandon the plan of availing ourselves of the co-operation of his imperial majesty by contributing money to his assistance. When we consider the amount of the expense, and the magnitude of the service, there is no ground of comparison between them ! Upon what data does the honourable gentleman assume that the measure will lead to any difference of expense at all ? He may consider the war as unjust, as it was unnecessary, and as ill conducted in its process, as it was groundlessly undertaken : he may, if he pleases, think that the French were right in every thing in which this country thought them wrong, but he does not contend that we should this day throw down our arms and make unconditional submission to the enemy. Overlooking then the consideration of additional security, arising from the co-operation of the emperor, and the effects of that co-operation acting upon the spirit, the trade, the manufactures, and the population of the country ; overlooking, I say, these considerations (and surely when I put them aside none will suppose that I view them as trifling or unimportant) let him calculate the additional direct expense which it requires to protect our coasts from a vigilant and enterprising foe, who would have nothing to do but to molest his only remaining enemy. Reduce the public expenses as much as you can, and let the inevitable burthens of the war be alleviated as much as possible by well judged economy in the different branches of the public service ; but be not so weak or so treacherous to yourselves as to blot out one part of an estimate under pretence of economy, while you create another service which must be provided for at a much larger expense, and which would tend to aggravate the evil which it is your intention to cure.

The honourable gentleman does not recommend his motion, or rather he does not ground his opposition to the measure hereafter to be proposed upon the tendency of this opposition, to accelerate the restoration of peace. This, however, is an object which on no political question ought to be set out of view, and therefore I shall say a few words upon the subject in this point of light. Of those who wish for peace, there are two classes. There are some, and of these a very numerous body, who are desirous for peace, as soon as peace can be obtained on safe and honourable terms. To such it must be clear that the object of their wishes cannot be secured by laying aside the means of action. But there are others, and the honourable gentleman may be one, who are of opinion that, for the attainment of peace, there are no terms which we ought not to accept, no law to which we ought not to submit. Even those who entertain these humiliating ideas, would be guilty of insanity, were they to add to their degradation by laying aside one of the weapons to which they have to trust for the acquisition of their darling object. Such conduct would betray a desire not only to take any terms which the enemy might be pleased to dictate, but to take every means to render these terms as bad as possible. It is evident then, that the measure in agitation affects the question of peace, both as it depends upon the period of its restoration, and the terms on which it may be concluded. Did the reasonings upon the subject leave any doubt as to the fact, the conduct of the enemy through the whole course of the war would put the matter beyond all question.

Having said so much upon the topics of economy, and the return of peace, I proceed to advert to it as a means of restoring public credit. Now, what does the honourable gentleman here assume? He assumes, that the great operating cause of the present embarrassments has been foreign remittances; and upon this assumption, he objects to any further advances being made to the emperor. In this view of the subject, I shall beg leave to throw out a few suggestions, which will lead not only to a conclusion different from his, but to a conclusion directly opposite,

The honourable gentleman has had the goodness to give me intimation, that he has some serious charges to prefer against me. Of course, I shall probably have opportunities enough in future of explaining my own conduct; and with the decision of the house I shall most willingly abide, whatever that decision may be. As this is not the subject of discussion on this night, perhaps it is improper in me to say any thing upon it. I would only beg leave to observe, that the printed papers, upon which the honourable gentleman commented, contain the written representations of the bank, and, it is added, my answers. These answers, however, were not given in writing, and what is there printed under this title, is merely minutes of what passed between me and the governor and deputy-governor of the bank, reported for the perusal of the bank directors, without having been previously submitted to my examination; nor did I so much as see them till just before they were printed. The honourable gentleman argues, that advances to the emperor were calculated to produce ruinous consequences, that ruinous consequences did ensue, therefore that the advances made to the emperor were productive of ruinous consequences. This is very short logic: but if he will not believe it to be false upon my authority, if it is not too much to ask, let him compare it with information. In order to make his conclusion good, he must shew that the remittances made to the emperor actually did diminish the cash in the bank, and that the issue of the order in council was occasioned by the diminution produced by these remittances. If it should appear that these advances did not occasion any diminution of cash at the time that they were made; on the contrary, that the balance of cash rather increased, and that the mischief so much and so justly lamented arose from the operation of causes widely different, then, in justice as well as prudence, the house ought not to ascribe an evil to a cause different from that in which it originated.

The honourable gentleman preferred another charge against me, which I heard without much dismay—that I had persisted in sending money to the emperor when I was aware that the bank, from the line of conduct I was pursuing,

was approaching to a state of insolvency. This, again, he takes for granted without any information upon the subject. If it should turn out that, during the whole period that these remittances were made, so far was I from being aware of the approaching difficulties of the bank, that by the successful operation of commerce, the balance of exchange for all that time was in favour of this country, insomuch that, if these circumstances had continued, the state of the bank would at this day have been growing better, the honourable gentleman will surely not persist in the accusation, when he finds that the ground on which it was preferred is wholly and completely fallacious. The premises the honourable gentleman may wish to be taken on trust; but to this I object, not wishing to supersede his position by any assertion of my own, but merely because the house are not in possession of materials from which they can infer whether it be true or false. When these materials are before them, perhaps it may be found that the mischief arose from remittances of cash, which were sent to Ireland to a greater extent than usual, and to local alarms in this country, which caused a great run upon the bank for some time before the order in council was issued. This is all the answer which I think I need give to the honourable gentleman's charge of misrepresentation.

I have only a word more to say respecting an expression in the speech from the throne at the opening of the present session. In that speech his Majesty was advised to state, that the resources of the country were equal to every exertion—an expression founded certainly not upon a knowledge of the balance of cash or bullion at that time in the bank, but upon the survey of the general state of trade and manufactures of the kingdom. Our trade and manufactures certainly depend in a considerable degree upon the stability of public credit, which is interwoven with the independence of the country. To preserve that independence, then, is necessary above all things to the restoration of public credit; and, next to the preservation of this independence, is the prevention of the danger of a future run upon the bank. And here we may look at the question in two points

of view. Let us first look at the best way to procure the greatest quantity of cash; and, if the subject is fairly viewed, I do not despair of convincing the house that the remittance of a sum to the emperor, instead of obstructing and impeding the influx of cash into the kingdom, will accelerate and increase it. I will grant that, if collateral circumstances did not vary, the balance in our favour would be diminished precisely in proportion to the sum sent abroad. But will it be contended, that abandoning an ally would have no effect upon the markets of Europe, and that such a step, were it taken by this country, would not influence any of the avenues of her commerce? Such a position is so absurd and untenable, that it would be an insult on the good sense of the house to spend their time in combating it. But a profitable trade depends not only on the state of the purchaser to receive, but of the seller to send. And need I ask what effect it would have upon the zeal, the spirit, the industry, and consequently the trade and manufactures of the country, were our coasts to be incessantly threatened by the whole concentrated force of France, which would be the case were the emperor obliged, in consequence of our refusing to aid him with money, to conclude a separate peace with our common enemy? When the subject, therefore, is viewed in this light, who is so short sighted as not to see, that the inconvenience which may arise from present exertion would be much more than counterbalanced by the pressure of subsequent events? If the argument be admitted in one case, there is no possible case to which it may not be applied. In short, it may be argued upon the same grounds, that, as soon as you experience the difficulties arising from a drain of cash, you must give up all your foreign connections, and upon this principle you ought to withdraw your protection from all your possessions in the East and West Indies. Of these possessions, for instance, it might be said, "True, they have been accounted extremely valuable, they have yielded great profits, the produce of them has formed a great article of commerce, and been the cause of a vast influx of wealth into the country, but in time of war they put us to an

of view. Let us first look at the best way to procure the greatest quantity of cash; and, if the subject is fairly viewed, I do not despair of convincing the house that the remittance of a sum to the emperor, instead of obstructing and impeding the influx of cash into the kingdom, will accelerate and increase it. I will grant that, if collateral circumstances did not vary, the balance in our favour would be diminished precisely in proportion to the sum sent abroad. But will it be contended, that abandoning an ally would have no effect upon the markets of Europe, and that such a step, were it taken by this country, would not influence any of the avenues of her commerce? Such a position is so absurd and untenable, that it would be an insult on the good sense of the house to spend their time in combating it. But a profitable trade depends not only on the state of the purchaser to receive, but of the seller to send. And need I ask what effect it would have upon the zeal, the spirit, the industry, and consequently the trade and manufactures of the country, were our coasts to be incessantly threatened by the whole concentrated force of France, which would be the case were the emperor obliged, in consequence of our refusing to aid him with money, to conclude a separate peace with our common enemy? When the subject, therefore, is viewed in this light, who is so short sighted as not to see, that the inconvenience which may arise from present exertion would be much more than counterbalanced by the pressure of subsequent events? If the argument be admitted in one case, there is no possible case to which it may not be applied. In short, it may be argued upon the same grounds, that, as soon as you experience the difficulties arising from a drain of cash, you must give up all your foreign connections, and upon this principle you ought to withdraw your protection from all your possessions in the East and West Indies. Of these possessions, for instance, it might be said, "True, they have been accounted extremely valuable, they have yielded great profits, the produce of them has formed a great article of commerce, and been the cause of a vast influx of wealth into the country, but in time of war they put us to an

expense; we will save therefore in future the expense of protection." But how? By sacrificing all the present and future advantages which might flow from the possession of them. Precisely the same argument will apply to an ally.

But if the reasoning is just in the view of procuring an influx of cash from abroad, how much stronger is it in the view of promoting circulation at home, which is fully as necessary for the restoration of the credit of the bank as the other! If our foreign commerce would be affected by the abandonment of an ally, how much more would our internal situation be affected by the pressure which would naturally result from an enemy encreasing in strength in a direct ratio to our inability to resist his efforts! Would not the natural consequence be a new alarm, accompanied with a disposition to hoard? And thus the immediate cause of the mischief would be renewed. I trust that, though there might be some cause for the late alarm, it is now almost gone by; and I am convinced, that the more the state of the country is enquired into, the less ground there is for despondency, or the apprehension of any danger which Englishmen may not boldly meet with the fortitude which belongs to the national character. While our object is however to remove alarm, and to restore the public credit, is it wise or prudent to court a greater alarm? Can it be expected that the effects of the greater would be less serious than of the slighter alarm, or that even the same effects would not do much more harm? Those, then, who look to the restoration of public credit in the bank of England as their favourite object, should be the last persons to counteract a measure which has an obvious tendency to produce that event to which their wishes and their endeavours tend: and how the honourable gentleman can claim the benefit of the argument drawn from his subject, I have yet to learn, nor can I even guess.

There is still another topic left, upon which I feel myself impelled to say a few words, namely, the additional security that would be given to credit by the restoration of peace. Whether the best mode of obtaining peace is to run the risk of losing the

aid of the emperor, is a question upon which there exists but little doubt. We have seen long ago that the uniform object of the enemy's policy has been to disunite us from our ally. This design has manifested itself in the course of several negotiations and discussions, and we have seen a similar policy too successfully practised with other powers who were formerly leagued with us against France, and who have been seduced, some into a neutrality, others into open hostility against us. She has publicly and repeatedly declared her wish to make a separate peace with Austria, that she might be enabled to dictate terms to us, or to carry on the war against this country with greater effect. It is but very lately that we have heard that France has, a short time ago, made distinct overtures of peace to the emperor to the exclusion of this country, and that he, with his accustomed honour and good faith, instead of accepting of them, communicated them to the court of St. James's, and renewed his declaration to the enemy, that he would not conclude a peace except in conjunction with Great Britain, justly persuaded that no peace can be concluded on a permanent foundation, but one founded upon a due regard to the individual claims, and the common interests of the different powers of Europe.

Putting apart, therefore, the obligations of gratitude and honour, it must be obvious to every one whose views are not confined within the narrowest and most contracted limits, that the best mode of attaining the desirable object of peace is, to persevere in making a common cause with the emperor, and aiding him with those means which his own dominions do not furnish, but with which the resources of this country enable us to supply him. It is for this house to determine whether they will give success to the intrigues of the enemy, which have hitherto been frustrated by the fidelity and magnanimity of our ally, or whether they will persevere in those measures, which are most likely to bring the contest to a safe and honourable issue. To their judgment and their spirit I leave the decision, convinced that they will act in a manner becoming the representatives of a great and powerful nation. On these grounds I think there is no use in

countenancing the present measure, and as it does not commit the house to give any opinion upon the subject, I shall give it my negative.

The resolution was negatived,

Ayes - - - - - 87

Noes - - - - - 266

April 26, 1797.

The order of the day was read, and the House resolved itself into a committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Sylvester Douglas in the chair;—the report of the select committee of finance having been previously referred to the said committee.

Mr. PITT :—

In the great and extensive prosecution of the business which it is my duty this day to submit to the consideration of the committee, it is impossible for me not to feel the weight and importance of the burthens which our exigencies have occasioned, and still less is it impossible for me not to feel considerable regret, and great personal disappointment in being compelled, however reluctantly, to propose an addition to the ample and large provision already made, towards defraying the expenses of the country in a wide and calamitous war, and increase the present burthens which are borne with unexampled patience by all ranks of the community. I am conscious the sensations of every gentleman in the committee will be hurt on this occasion, and I trust, whatever may be their feelings upon this subject, they will give me credit for my sensations being not less alive. But it is not my duty to dwell on those sensations.—Much as I regret the causes of the war, and the calamities with which it has been attended; much as I regret the manner in which the hope of a speedy termination has been obstructed, and additional expenses thereby incurred; much as I regret increasing expenses,

where expenses have already been so much and almost so insufferably increased; and whatever may be my own personal mortification and regret in being obliged to come forward at such a distressful period with new burdens; I feel it, notwithstanding, to be my first great duty, as I hope and trust the house and country will feel with me, with a firm and manly spirit, to convince the enemy that however great may be our pressure, however embarrassed our circumstances, we are determined to contend with them as long as we are able, rather than submit to haughty and dishonourable terms. Though we may not be successful enough to accomplish the means by which we can terminate the fatal contest in which we are engaged, consistently with the honour, security, and permanent and essential interests of the nation, let us yet convince our enemies, that our spirit does not desert us in our trials, but that, in spite of every difficulty, we will still be just both to ourselves and to our country. In this sentiment I hope to meet the sense of the house and the people at large, whose patriotism, justice, and magnanimity, as they never have failed in the most arduous conflicts, will not, I trust, fail now, but will manifest, on the contrary, that whatever may be the event, they have but one duty to pursue, viz. to secure and preserve the safety, honour, and happiness of the kingdom. Without hesitation, though certainly not without anxiety and regret, I shall now proceed to submit to the committee what I have to propose.

In doing this, it is with pleasure I declare, that I shall not only derive great advantage, but that my labour is materially diminished also by the very able and impartial statements of the first report of the select committee of finance, which has been printed and this day laid before you. However, in particular parts, I may be justified in differing from these statements, however favourable those statements may be to the general wishes of the house and of the country (and I am ready to confess they are more favourable than what I have to propose), I shall guide myself by their direction, and render that report the basis of the plan of my proposal. I shall follow the usual mode of proceed-

ing upon subjects of this nature, and first take a view of the transactions which have caused the expenses for which we are now called on to provide, and state what sums remain to be provided for: I shall then compare these provisional demands with what have been already provided for in the course of the present year, and submit the plans which I propose for a further provision; and in this process I shall be as short and explicit as I can. For this purpose, therefore, and according to the usual practice, I shall first call the attention of the house to the whole amount of services for the present year, with the amount of the sums already voted for defraying them, and the amount of the sums remaining to be voted; and after that I shall detail the ways and means by which these services have already been defrayed, and by which the remainder may be defrayed; and finally I shall state the specific measures which I mean to ground upon those statements towards the provision for the accumulated interest and charges. For the sake of being clear and intelligible, I shall proceed article by article, under various heads; and, to pursue the customary mode, I shall of course begin with the navy.

The committee will recollect, that for the naval service of the current year, there has been already voted the sum of 7,661,000*l.* in addition to which the committee of supply has voted 5,000,000*l.* more. Gentlemen will recollect, that although I estimated the expenses of the naval department at 7,661,000*l.* I then stated my intention to propose the provision of a further sum of 2,500,000*l.* in order to remedy an inconvenience which heretofore had arisen, and thereby have 10,161,000*l.* in cash towards defraying any excess of navy debt. Such, however, have been the extraordinary exertions and expenses of the war, that there yet remained an unfunded debt of the navy unprovided for, to the amount of four millions. In the statements of the select committee, a comparison has been given between this outstanding navy debt and the outstanding navy debt in 1783, and the committee has made an allowance for 3,000,000*l.* In the reports of the select committee it appears by the best estimates, that, as far as they can be ascertained, the expenses for the navy

service would amount to 12,900,000*l.* which is short of what I have stated them to be, but exceeding what I formerly considered them. By way of reducing this amount, I ought further to state that a sum of 800,000*l.* went in aid of the navy services of 1796, and consequently left the provision for the services of 1797 deficient in that sum, for, however, careful we may be, a part of the expenses will be carried on in navy bills, though certainly to less extent than formerly. In the provision of 12,000,000*l.* four shillings per month would be carried to the ordinary expenses of the navy, whereby about 110,000*l.* would be taken away from the unfunded debt. I suppose there will then be a million, or a million and a half of navy debt afloat. Such was my former statement, and compared with the statement of the committee, there is this difference, that it supposes 1,500,000*l.* of floating navy debt, instead of 3,000,000*l.* as the select committee of finance has calculated. I do not know whether I have expressed myself clearly upon this point; but if not, I shall be happy to give any gentleman a further explanation.

The next head of service is the army, upon which there has been already voted the sum of 10,913,000*l.* The accounts for foreign corps are not yet made out, but they soon will be, and I have reason to hope their expenses will be less than were calculated in my original statement, and less than they appeared to the select committee. I have reason to think this diminution will amount to one half, and that the sum of 370,000*l.* will be sufficient; 6,000,000*l.* was the total amount estimated for the army establishment, independent of the extraordinaries, which is less by 297,000*l.* than the estimates for the ensuing year by the select committee. In 1796 there were some extraordinary expenses of the army incurred, which at present remain unprovided for, to the amount of 3,287,000*l.*; and in the interval of the 8th of December and the 1st of January, there was another outstanding demand made evident of 100,000*l.* which, in consequence of not being paid, is to be added to the other, and makes a sum of 3,387,000*l.* out-standing army debt to be provided for.

It appears by the report of the select committee, moreover, that, by treasury bills paid at the bank, and warrants for army service due and unpaid, a further sum of 2,081,000*l.* remains to be provided for, inasmuch as treasury bills paid at the bank previous to the 5th of January 1797, and those which were due on the 8th of January, but not included, amounted to 1,660,000*l.* to which were to be added 428,000*l.* for army warrants. So that the sum total would be as before stated 2,088,000*l.* The estimated sum to be incurred by the army extraordinaries for 1797, according to the report of the secret committee, and for the amount of which it is my intention to provide, is 4,000,000*l.* It was not proposed before Christmas to raise any sum of money for this head of service, but so far as any calculation to the latest possible period could be made, the calculation nearly tallied with that sum. It is here to be observed, that the extraordinaries of the army are now, for the first time, brought forward by way of estimate, at least they were never done so fully till the present war, but they were paid out of the money granted for other services, leaving the provision for these services deficient to another year. In addition to this, there has been advanced to the emperor, by way of loan, and which will be due to the public 1,200,000*l.* and a sum of 900,000*l.* advanced to the merchants of Grenada and St. Vincents, which will also be returned. There are further advances to the emperor to be set against the expenses of extraordinaries to a very large amount, for which it will not be necessary to provide a present fund, though I set them down as so much credit against so much debt. The treasury bills and army warrants at home, did not go to the extent of 2,088,000*l.*; but there were bills from remote parts, notwithstanding the precautions I had taken to calculate and curtail the expenses abroad as much as possible, which exceeded what was formerly thought upon estimate to be their utmost amount. This might in part be owing to the unforeseen and incalculable operations of the war: however, I did not think it consistent to leave them to rest on distant means of payment, and I chose accordingly to propose for their provision. This comprises all under the head of the army.

I now come to the ordnance department, for which there has been already voted the sum of 1,623,000*l.* and to which I do not mean to propose any addition. I must observe, however, that since the estimates were made, a demand of 300,000*l.* to pay debentures for stores supplied and services performed, has come in for part of the ordnance expenses, in the same manner as the treasury bills of 1,600,000*l.* of which I did not then know. To this deficiency may be added another in the barrack department, in which an outstanding debt remains, not merely for the building of barracks, but for the expenses of provision and accommodation, in which the soldiers would have been furnished to the amount of the same charge upon the public if they had not been garrisoned in barracks, but had been quartered elsewhere. I mention this to remove any prejudice which might perhaps have otherwise been indulged, and shall conclude this article by recommending the provision advised by the select committee of 717,000*l.* which in the present view of this subject will defray the whole demands. I have now proceeded through the navy, army, and ordnance, in which I do not recollect to have omitted any extraordinary items, except that I have not mentioned a specific additional sum, which I mean to propose for the further relief of his imperial majesty in the present critical period, and the particular statement of which I have reserved to a separate discussion. As early as practicable, that subject shall be submitted to the consideration of the committee; but however important it may appear, it is not expedient with any arrangement to enter on it at present.

The next branch of the supplies is for defraying the expenses of what is called the miscellaneous service, which includes the expenses of plantations, convicts, &c. For this there has been already voted the sum of 378,000*l.* and if I proceed by the estimates of the select committee, a further sum of 929,000*l.* will be found necessary. In this sum 400,000*l.* is comprised for making provision before hand for articles which it has been usual to pay in the first instance out of the civil list, and to propose afterwards to parliament to vote a sum sufficient to repay what

has been so advanced. Under this statement, I have not included the provision of any sum which the important domestic happiness of the royal family, and the accustomed feelings of the country have allowed as the usual portion with any of the female branches. That provision will come better perhaps hereafter under a distinct and specific proposition. There is, however, a sum of 600,000*l.* included, which is proposed to be lent to the suffering Grenada merchants over and above the sums which I before stated, and which are to be ultimately repaid; but I took occasion to include them in my statement of the actual expenditure, because they are sums for which I find it necessary to provide a temporary provision.

The next article of supply is the annual provision for the discharge of the national debt of 200,000*l.*

To this is to be added, the usual provision made for the deficiency of the produce of the taxes upon land and malt, to the amount of 350,000*l.*

1,054,000*l.* is to be provided to repay the bank for advances upon the growing produce of the consolidated fund, and 1,370,000*l.* to discharge exchequer bills issued on the credit of the consolidated fund for 1796, and paid also by the bank.

I shall propose a further provision of 900,000*l.* to meet the deficiencies of land and malt not included in the estimate, but which I think may probably arise.

The next sum is 1,110,000*l.* voted in the committee of supply, for the discharge of navy and exchequer bills, raised by an act of last session, upon a vote of credit in 1796. The house will recollect, that a provision was made for funding navy and exchequer bills, and relieving the market of so much outstanding debt. There was a party who did not choose to avail themselves of the liberty of funding the bills they hold, and this sum was to make good their demands.

The next sum is 2,177,000*l.* to make good 3,500,000*l.* charged by an act of last session on the growing produce of the consolidated fund, for the service of the year 1796. 3,500,000*l.* was the sum granted and thought applicable, but various circum-

stances had operated to its disappointment. Exchequer bills advanced to the merchants of Grenada and St. Vincent's in consequence of the misfortunes in those colonies were paid in again ; a loss was sustained in the product both of the new and old taxes, by the stoppage of our distilleries, the defalcation of which sums was not made good in the year, and to this was to be added the payment of bounties to seamen, by the receivers of the customs out of the produce of that year's revenue, which caused a defalcation in the produce of the customs ; and lastly, the bounties upon the importation of corn. These circumstances of course would not make the whole deficiencies good, and leave the consolidated fund applicable to the service of 1797 ; and as I cannot suppose that the committee would choose to have those sums charged like a mortgage on the consolidated fund, I have provided for its relief, and taken them as an article of supply from the 5th of April 1796 to the 5th of April 1797.

There is only one other sum which remains to be stated, and that is a vote of credit to the amount of 3,000,000*l.* As 500,000*l.* has already been advanced to the emperor, I wish, if it meets with the approbation of parliament, to be provided with a further sum of 2,500,000*l.* in order to make further advances, if approved of, as the time and exigencies may require. I state this in order to let the committee know the ultimate amount of what sums it may be necessary to provide ; at the same time I desire to have it understood, that I do not mean to pledge any person to a final vote upon further advances to the emperor, unless for a certain sum to a limited extent, which I shall state before I sit down. Supposing this vote of credit to take place, however, or not, I shall state that as part of the sum to a limited extent, which I deem absolutely necessary at this critical period, to allow the emperor to fulfill his engagements, together with my reasons for it. I have now gone through the whole of the supply, all the demands for which it was not possible to calculate before Christmas, and throughout my statements of them I have acted on the report of the select committee. In so extensive a statement it is impossible for me to hope that I have pro-

ceeded so clearly as not sometimes scarcely to have made myself understood; but if any gentleman labours under any difficulty, I shall only request him to follow me through the very able statements of that report, and I believe he will find our accounts tally so nearly in the estimated services and outstanding arrears, as to shew the fullest confirmation of the accuracy of my statements. For the sake of being more explicit, however, I shall sum up all the heads of the supply in a recapitulation.

Navy	12,661,000
Army	6,600,000
Army Extraordinaries	3,387,000
Treasury Bills and Army Warrants	2,088,000
Ordnance	1,623,000
Ordnance, Extraordinaries, and Barracks	737,000
Miscellaneous Service	929,000
Advances to the merchants of Grenada	600,000
Imperial Loan	500,000
Annual addition to Sinking Fund	200,000
Deficiency of Land and Malt	350,000
Re-payments to the Bank for advances on the Consolidated Fund of 1795	1,054,000
Ditto 1796	1,370,000
Further deficiencies of Land and Malt	900,000
To discharge Exchequer Bills issued on the credit of the Consolidated Fund for 1796	1,110,000
Deficiencies of Consolidated Fund	2,177,000
Vote of Credit	2,500,000
	38,786,000

Now, Sir, in regard to the ways and means for providing these supplies, I must beg leave to state, that a sum a little less than seven millions will cover the expense; because a repayment of some of the advances may take place in the course of the year; 1,500,000*l.* arising from the taxes on the land and malt, will be payable by October, and exchequer bills to the amount of 1,600,000*l.* will repay the treasury bills in the same sum paid at the bank.

My next duty, in the mean time, is to state with what ways and means I am provided to meet the various sums of this large amount. In order to do that, I shall begin with the land and malt already voted, which according to the usual calculation is reckoned at 2,750,000*l*; the surplus of grants already voted, 420,000*l*. and the loan by voluntary subscription, 18,000,000*l*. making a sum total of 21,170,000*l*. These are the only sums already voted towards defraying the expenses of the year, but there were other sums included in the original statement, of which the first was a lottery. The lottery has varied in the general statement, but taken according to the usual profit, it produces somewhere about 200,000*l*. By exchequer bills in the former statement, I took credit for 5,500,000*l*. which is the usual amount of exchequer bills kept afloat: but I do not now think it prudent to rely upon an issue of exchequer bills to that amount, on account of the recent embarrassments in public credit. I shall not reckon therefore on a larger issue than 3,000,000*l*. which is less than the quantity now in circulation. I shall take the surplus of the growing produce of the consolidated fund on a new estimate, on account of the charges on it, and shall therefore take credit but for a moderate sum to be derived from that source. This moderation does not arise from any diminution of the permanent taxes, because the report of the select committee on finance confirms my repeated assertions of the flourishing state of the permanent revenue; nor does it arise from any considerable disappointment from the produce of new taxes, because, upon a review of the new taxes levied in 1793, 1794, 1795, and the best estimates of the probable amount of the new taxes for 1796, when any supposition is entertained that they will not be able in their ultimate amount to maintain themselves at the produce at which they were computed, by setting them against the loans since raised, and operating one against the other to a general diminution, it will be found that they go near to counterbalance any deficiency, and are nearly equal to the charge upon the consolidated fund by providing the interest of the funded debt. But it is to be recollected, that although in laying taxes I take credit

for an amount which cannot be so productive as I may have calculated, I have generally endeavoured, soon enough, to meet the increased charge, and prevent an accumulation of unfunded debt. I now stand with the knowledge of two quarters, freed from a mortgage of 1,075,000*l.* and higher in their computation than I was justified to make them. As heavy as my computation might be, however, I have the satisfaction to hope, the total of the supply may recur before the taxes of next year, though allowance must be taken for both considerations. Every estimate is liable to uncertainty, but the average of the permanent taxes upon four years I find to be 13,919,000*l.* to which adding duties of 1796, I shall have a total sum of 17,803,000*l.* I am aware of the allowance of wine from the stock in hand, but in looking at the produce of the sum total of the permanent taxes, and looking forward to distant periods when fresh sums will become due, I have a right to assume that to be the amount; for when we cease to take account of the stock on hand, the annual consumption will replace the deficiency. The taxes imposed for 1797, were reckoned at 2,100,000*l.* Part of those taxes, it is true, are yet under consideration, but many will take place at an early period. I do not suppose, therefore, that I shall be taking the benefit of the estimate at too much, if upon the whole, I value them at 1,500,000*l.* To this is to be added the further amount of 600,000*l.* which I suppose to be the nett profit of the taxes which I am about to propose, and the advantage of which we are likely to receive by the 5th of April next, so that the whole yearly amount of the produce of the permanent revenue may then be calculated at 19,903,000*l.* Mr. Pitt then calculated the various other sums, to meet the supplies from the arrears of land and malt, the sale of Dutch prizes, the returns of payment to the bank, the remaining money in hand upon the corn bounties, &c. making a sum total of 42,870,000*l.*

But the loan which he had agreed for provisionally was 18,000,000*l.* of which sum it was intended that 1,500,000*l.* should be borrowed for the service of his Majesty's kingdom of Ireland: the money to be raised at their charge, and interest to

be provided for it by that kingdom. It was in his contemplation to propose to the committee on a future day to make further advances to the emperor to the amount of 2,000,000*l.* distinctly from the loan of 1,500,000*l.* which he should also propose on a future day, as a specific proposition. In making his bargain for the loan, therefore, he had done it in two ways, he had made a bargain for 14,500,000*l.* certain, of which 13,000,000*l.* were for British services to be provided for at the charge of Britain, and 1,500,000*l.* for, and to be at the charge of, Ireland. He had made a bargain conditionally for 3,500,000*l.* if the committee should agree with him that it would be wise and proper to make a further loan to the emperor. In his opinion it might be done with perfect safety without affecting the cash of the country, without altering the exchanges of Europe, or in any degree injuring our trade. If the emperor had an expenditure to make in this country, we might surely assist him to all that amount, such, for instance, as the half-yearly dividend which he had to pay, amounting to 200,000*l.* and he certainly should make a specific proposition to accommodate him by the advance of that sum. On Monday next he should submit a proposition to the committee to that effect. He now came to state the amount of the *bonus* to the subscribers to the new loan of 18,000,000*l.* He could not say that the terms of that loan were advantageous to the public. They were, however, under all the circumstances, perhaps, more favourable than had been anticipated; it was not fair to argue from any depression that had happened since the bargain had been made. Though he had struggled hard for good terms, yet he had not been unmindful of the situation of things, and he thought he might with confidence rely on the equitable nature of the terms to both sides. He had considered the price of the funds on the day when the bargain was made as prices likely to be permanent; he thought that the funds had found their level, and that they were not likely to be depressed further. He had therefore proposed to consider the 3 per cents. consols and reduced at 50, the 4 per cents. at 64, and the long annuity at fourteen years. To this, however, the contractors did not

seem inclined perfectly to agree; they thought that the 3 per cents. reduced, and the 4 per cents. were taken too high. According to this statement the terms were as follows:

125 0 0	of 3 per cents. consols at	50 . .	£.62 10
50 0 0	of 3 per cents. reduced at	50 . .	25 0
20 0 0	of 4 per cents. at . . .	64 . .	12 16
0 6 6	long annuity at 14 years		4 11

Making a *bonus* to the lender of 4*l.* 17*s.* but this, though infinitely too high, was not all, for there was also the discount which he had agreed to allow at the rate of 4 per cent. instead of 3, which had been heretofore usual. To all persons, therefore, who took advantage of this discount, it was worth

2 8

£.107 5

To those who did not take advantage of the discount in paying up in full, there was still an advantage by their being entitled to the interest, though they paid their money only by instalments, and this advantage was estimated to be nearly two pounds, so that in every view of the bargain the *bonus* was in reality equal to six pounds seventeen shillings. A great and improvident *bonus* for the public to give, but which, he was sorry to say, under all the circumstances, he could not prevent. It was to be observed, however, that the six shillings and sixpence of long annuity was only to be given in case the loan should be 18,000,000*l.* and there was to be a deduction of sixpence for each million, by as many millions as it should be short of that amount. The permanent interest on this loan was at the rate of six pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence, *per cent. per annum*, to which, adding for the charge of management and the redemption fund, the interest would be eight pounds seven shillings and sixpence. It would be necessary for him to move a resolution that exchequer bills, which had been recently taken at par upon a special condition of being received on the first payment of the loan, should be so received as money. It was a great accommodation to the public; it had prevented these bills from being discredited, and about 420,000*l.* had been received by government in this way.

I have taken a view (continued Mr. Pitt) of the total amount of the supplies which have been voted for the service of the year, of the total amount of the ways and means which have been provided for defraying the charges already incurred, of the total amount of the produce of the taxes which have been imposed to pay the interest of the capital debt, and stated the terms of the loan which have been provisionally contracted for; and in doing this, I have endeavoured to make provision for an excess of navy debt above the estimate, and for the extraordinaries of the army which might occur in the course of the year 1797. I have only to mention one circumstance, in addition to those which I have already enumerated, which is, that there were some unliquidated claims of the East-India company, the amount of which were unknown, but which somewhat increased our outstanding demands. I do not pretend that my statement is entirely free from inaccuracy, error, or omission; but in no one branch of it have I intentionally concealed or mistated the real situation of the country.

There is another point which I found it necessary to mention as a probable addition to the public expense, but which I reserve for discussion till it is brought before the house in a regular shape. From a variety of unforeseen and unexpected circumstances, the last loan of eighteen millions, which has been raised by voluntary subscription, has fallen to a rate of discount which has been attended with considerable loss to the subscribers. It will be matter of separate and distinct consideration on a future day, whether the house will allow that loss entirely to rest upon the subscribers, who have so laudably and honourably manifested their zeal and their patriotism in the public cause, or whether some relief ought not to be granted to them proportionate to the loss which they have sustained.

Of the loan which had been provisionally contracted for, there was, he said, as he had stated before, a million and a half as a loan for the payment of the sums already advanced to the emperor; a million and a half for Ireland, and two millions to provide for such farther advances as the house might think fit,

upon mature deliberation, to authorize the government to send to his imperial majesty. There remained, therefore, just thirteen millions, for which he had to provide interest at the rate of 8*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* including the reduction fund, which amounted to a sum of 959,000*l.* Besides this, there was a floating navy debt of three millions and a half, which could not be diminished while the war continued, and which could only be paid off at the return of peace. But, as money would then be borrowed on better terms than at present, he found it necessary to provide only 5 per cent. interest for this debt, which would make a sum of 175,000*l.* There was also a deficiency arising from some of the taxes which he had proposed before Christmas having been abandoned, amounting to about 100,000, which it was necessary for him now to supply. The whole interest, therefore, which he had to provide for by additional imposts, amounted to 1,234,000*l.* There was no reason to suppose that the taxes which had been imposed before Christmas would be less productive than they had been estimated, and in forming the present estimate of the sum wanted to pay the interest of the increased capital debt, he took no credit for any surplus which might arise from the produce of the permanent taxes.

Under this view of the subject, Mr. Pitt proceeded to state the outline of the sources of taxation which appeared to be least objectionable for defraying the burthens which we were under the necessity of meeting, and by meeting which with manliness and courage we were most likely to overcome the difficulties of our situation. And upon this part of the subject he confessed feeling himself a good deal at a loss, since there was no mode of taxation that he could propose which was not liable to objections of one kind or other. It was to be recollected, however, that our situation was one in which there was only a choice of evils, and our submission was due to those which, upon the whole, were the least pressing. In looking at the different branches of revenue, there was one source of taxation which appeared to him to be preferable to any other, because the

produce was easily raised, widely diffused, and which pressed little upon any particular class, especially the lower orders of society ; and it was the more eligible on this account, that the revenue arising from it, at the same time that it was ample, was safely and expeditiously collected at a small expense.

What I allude to, said he, is the general branch of stamp duties, which, though they are now more than double what they were in the American war, have not undergone any considerable increase for some years. My object is to impose an additional duty which will bear upon the great mass of stamps, with the exception only of those which have been lately increased, or of those which from their nature will not admit of any augmentation. The class on which I shall propose the greatest addition, is that which passes under the name of consolidated stamp duties, by which is meant that class in which stamps of the same denomination are applied to a great number of different instruments, such as deeds, copyholds, adjudications, and all law instruments. I mean, however, that law instruments should be exempted from the operation of the tax, because, though it certainly is proper as much as possible to discourage litigation, yet, while it might tend to diminish the number of frivolous law suits, it might also increase oppressive costs, which, for the sake of justice, ought to be avoided. Besides law instruments, I am of opinion that the probates of wills for small sums should be included in the exception. As a tax upon legacies has been lately imposed, I propose that they also should be exempted in the present instance. Policies of insurance for the same reason have a fair claim to exemption. Upon the great bulk of the stamps, however, upon which I propose that the present tax should operate, I think that the present duty should be doubled. This source of revenue I expect to yield 320,000*l*.

The next object of taxation to which I look, is the transfer of property. I do not mean that the tax on single skins, which now pay a stamp duty of seven shillings, should be doubled ; I only intend that the duty should be increased three shillings,

that they should pay ten shillings instead of seven. It must have appeared, however, that the instruments by which validity is given to any transaction, and to which property owes security, might fairly be made a test of contribution. I have to propose, therefore, not only an additional stamp duty upon each skin, but a scale of duty proportioned to the consideration in money which is transferred. This is only extending a principle already recognized and adopted in the duty which is imposed upon property sold by auction. That duty is sixpence per pound upon real property, and tenpence per pound on all personal property, disposed of in that way, and produces 100,000*l.* a year. Observing that that tax does not operate against the disposal of property by auction, and calculating that ten millions of property are annually transferred from one hand to another, I compute that by imposing a duty of fourpence per pound upon all private transfers, a sum will be raised of at least 170,000*l.* per annum.

At present there is a stamp upon all deeds, but I understand that authenticated copies of them, unstamped, are admitted. I see no reason why the duty should not attach to the copy as well as to the original. It has been suggested to me, that a regulation of this kind would bring into the revenue 40,000*l.* per annum.

The fourth article which I mean to propose as a subject of taxation, relates to the probates of wills; all of which, except those for sums under 300*l.* I shall move to pay a certain duty, which may produce the sum of 40,000*l.*

The next subject I have to offer to the committee, is one which will produce a great deal of discussion out of this house. It relates to a certain species of property well known in this country; for it will be the vehicle (and that not a verbal one) of conveying to the different parts of the country what I am now stating. When I consider the great prevalence of this vehicle of general intelligence; when I consider the amazing extent to which it has been carried; that the luxury of it has been so very generally felt and practised, that the taste of the

public is not likely to be shaken by any trifling increase in the price of an article sought after with such universal avidity; when I consider also the immense profits produced by these articles of luxury, which are of a nature that ought not to exempt them from their share of general taxation, I conceive that the laying of an additional duty on newspapers is a measure that cannot be in any manner objectionable. This might be done without any injury either to the editors or the authors of such publications. The present duty is 2*d.* on each paper; in addition to which I shall propose a further tax of one penny halfpenny; and even in that case considerable gains will be produced to the proprietors of papers. I should conceive that the price to customers ought not to be raised any higher than this additional duty; because on a former occasion, in consequence of an increased duty on paper, the price of newspapers was raised far beyond that proportion, and has continued so ever since; therefore I do not imagine the proprietors of them can now have any equitable claim to an increase in their price. The sum produced by this duty will amount to 114,000*l.*

The next thing I have to propose, is a modification of the duties on advertisements published in newspapers. According to the regulations that exist at present, there is no difference in the duty upon an advertisement of three lines and that on one of the greatest extent. I should propose to vary the present mode, and according to the regulations which I shall offer, there may be advertisements the duty on which shall amount only to some shillings, while on others the duty shall rise up to some pounds sterling. The estimated produce from this source will amount to 20,000*l.*

The next duty I have to propose, is to arise from a regulation of the stamps on attornies' certificates, by which certain frauds that have hitherto been practised may be prevented. This will produce the sum of 15,000*l.*

There is one more article of luxury on which I shall propose to lay a tax, that is, all plate that shall be manufactured for the

purpose of ornamental use, which will produce the sum of 30,000*l*.

All those taxes which I have just enumerated, seem to me to press as lightly on the general bulk of the people as any I could think of, and least of all to increase the national difficulties.

There still remains one more to be added. I have endeavoured to find one; which, although I confess it is not free from some speculative and practical objections, will not however be found inconvenient to the public at large. It is a subject which has often been thought of before this time; which has been once before this house, but was withdrawn. This is a tax on carriages of all sorts, and on goods of all kinds conveyed by carriages which pass through turnpike-gates, where the tax is to operate by an increase of the tolls. To this it will be right to make some exemptions; such as exemptions on all new tolls till they shall have risen to a certain amount, general exceptions provided for by general laws, and local exceptions in certain districts. The same exceptions that now prevail in tolls ought also to prevail on the part of the public; and I should propose that the same duty may be taken for the public, that is now paid for tolls. I cannot exactly say how much this will produce; but I know, that when it was brought forward here about fifteen years ago, it was estimated at no less a sum than between 4 and 500,000*l*. I have had an opportunity of knowing the amount of the tolls of the gates about the metropolis, which are not a tenth part of those throughout the whole kingdom. By this means I can in some manner ascertain the amount of the present tax; and I think it will produce between 4 and 500,000*l*. With respect to the principle of this tax, it may be objected to on the ground of its being a great hardship to lay a burden on passengers and the conveyance of goods; but I hope when gentlemen will consider how small a portion must fall to each individual, that they will not look upon this as a grievance, but rather as a manner of lightening the general burdens.

I have now stated every thing which I conceived material, in

as concise a manner as I could; and I return my thanks to the committee for the indulgence they have shewn me during the length of time I have trespassed on their attention. I have no other excuse to make, than that I am pleading the necessity of dwelling on a subject which I did not wish to bring forward imperfectly. And I now submit this pleasing circumstance to the consideration of the house, that in the midst of difficulties, and apparently surrounded by calamities, we have still been able to find such ample resources, as those which have been stated to them this day. I call upon them to reflect, that at the moment when we are struggling in a great contest—while we are labouring under pressures as heavy as they are unexampled, we still see the strength and powers which we possess; and that, if we are not to be alarmed at imaginary evils, if we are not to be dispirited by events which are not so calamitous in themselves as they have been conceived to be, we shall find the radical wealth and the ample means of this country fully sufficient to support us in every conjuncture of our affairs, and ultimately to restore us to that situation from which we have been removed for a time, by circumstances as extraordinary as they have been unavoidable.

Mr. Pitt concluded by moving resolutions founded on his statements.

The resolutions, after undergoing some discussion, were severally passed.

May 26, 1797.

MR. GREY, in pursuance of the notice he had previously given, this day brought forward his proposition for a Reform in Parliament, concluding his speech with moving, for leave to bring in a bill to amend the representation of the people in the House of Commons.

After the motion had been seconded by Mr. Erskine, MR. PITT rose:

Feeling, Sir, as I do, the danger with which the present proposition is attended, upon the grounds upon which it has been supported, and in the circumstances in which it has been brought

forward, I am very desirous, as early as possible in the debate, to state the reasons by which I am determined to give it my most decided opposition. The honourable gentleman who introduced the motion, began with disclaiming very distinctly, and, as far as he went, very satisfactorily, all those abstract principles of imprescriptible right, all those doctrines of the rights of man, on which those without doors, who are most eager in their professions of attachment to the cause which he now supports, rest the propriety of their demand, and upon which alone they would be contented with any species of parliamentary reform. The honourable gentleman denies the truth of that principle which prescribes any particular form of government, as that which is essential to freedom; or that universal suffrage is necessary to civil liberty; or that it even must depend upon that light which the revolution of France has let in upon the world, and from which however, he derives hopes of so much advantage to the general happiness of mankind. But, in disclaiming these views of the question, and in placing it upon the footing of the practical benefit it was calculated to produce, the honourable gentleman did not state all the considerations by which the conduct of a wise statesman was to be regulated, and the judgment of an upright senator to be guided. The question is not merely, whether some alteration might or might not be attended with advantage; but it is the degree of advantage which that alteration is likely to effect in the shape in which it is introduced; the mischief which may be occasioned from not adopting the measure, and the chance, on the other hand, of producing by the alteration an effect upon those to whom you give way, very different from that which had induced you to hazard the experiment. These are the considerations which the subject ought to embrace, and the views upon which impartial men must decide.

Before we adopt the conclusions of the right honourable gentleman, we have a right, it is even imposed upon us as a duty, to take into our view as a leading object, what probability there is by encouraging the particular mode of attaining that union, or of effecting that separation of the friends of moderate reform,

and the determined enemies to the constitution, which they conceive it calculated to produce; we must consider the danger of introducing an evil of a much greater magnitude than that we are now desirous to repair; and how far it is prudent to give an opening for those principles which aim at nothing less than the total annihilation of the constitution. The learned gentleman who seconded the motion said, that those who formerly supported parliamentary reform had sown the seeds of that eagerness for parliamentary reform, which was now displayed, and of the principles on which it was now pressed; he thinks that those, who have ever supported the cause of parliamentary reform upon grounds of practical advantage, must not oppose those who have nothing in common with them, but the name of reform, making that the cover for objects widely different, in order to support that pretence which they assume upon principles diametrically opposite to those upon which the true friends to the cause of reform ever proceeded. Will the honourable gentleman who made, or the learned gentleman who seconded the motion, say, that those men who contend, as an indispensable point, for universal suffrage;—that those who hold doctrines which go to the extinction of every branch of the constitution, because they think it convenient to avail themselves of the pretence of parliamentary reform, as the first step towards the attainment of their own views, and as facilitating their progress;—that those who, though they condescended to take advantage of the co-operation of those who support the cause of reform in this house, yet have never applied to parliament, and who would not even receive as a boon, what they contend for as a right;—can it seriously be said, that such men as these have embarked in the cause, or have proceeded on the principles of those, who upon far different grounds, and for far different objects, have moved this important question? Will they say, that those men have adopted the principles, or followed the course, of those who formerly have agitated the cause of reform, who have avowedly borrowed their political creed from the doctrines of the Right, of

Man, from the writings of Thomas Paine, from the monstrous and detestable system of the French jacobins and affiliated societies, from that proud, shallow, and presumptuous philosophy, which, pretending to communicate new lights to mankind, has carried theoretical absurdity higher than the wild imaginations of the most extravagant visionaries ever conceived, and carried practical evil to an extent which no age or history has equalled? Will it be said that those men pursued only that practical advantage, which a reform upon principles consonant to the British constitution was calculated to afford, who saw without emotion the detestable theories of the jacobins developed in the destructive ravage which marked their progress, and their practical effects in the bloody tragedies which were acted on the theatre of France, and who still adhered to their system of indefeasible right, when they saw such overwhelming proofs of its theoretical falsehood, and of its baleful tendency? Will it be believed that those men are actuated by principles consonant to the spirit of the British constitution, who, with the exception of the pretence of parliamentary reform, adopted all the forms of French political systems, who followed them through all their consequences, who looked upon the ravage which they spread through all laws, religion, and property, without shrinking from their practical effect, and who deemed the horrors with which it was attended, as the triumphs of their system? Can we believe, that men who remained unmoved by the dismal example which their principles had produced, whose pretensions rose and fell with the success or the decline of jacobinism in every part of the world, were ever actuated by a similarity of motives and of objects, with those who prosecuted the cause of reform as a practical advantage, and maintained it upon constitutional views? The utmost point of difference, indeed, that ever subsisted between those who supported, and those who opposed the question of reform, previous to the French revolution, which forms a new æra in politics, and in the history of the world, was union and concert in comparison with the views of those who

maintained that question upon grounds of expediency, and those who assert it as a matter of right.

The question then was, with those who contended for reform on grounds of expediency, whether the means proposed were calculated to infuse new vigour into the constitution? The object with those who affect a parliamentary reform upon French principles, is the shortest way to compass its utter destruction. From the period when the new and alarming æra of the French revolution broke in upon the world, and the doctrines which it ushered into light laid hold of the minds of men, I found that the grounds upon which the question rested were essentially and fundamentally altered. Whatever may have been my former opinion, am I to be told that I am inconsistent, if I feel that it is expedient to forego the advantage which any alteration may be calculated to produce, rather than afford an inlet to principles with which no compromise can be made; rather than hazard the utter annihilation of a system under which this country has flourished in its prosperity, by which it has been supported in its adversity, and by the energy and vigour of which it has been enabled to recover from the difficulties and distresses, with which it has had to contend? In the warmth of argument upon this subject, the honourable and learned gentleman has conceived himself at liberty to assume a proposition, which was not only unsupported by reasoning, but even contradicted by his own statements. The learned gentleman assumed that it was necessary to adopt the moderate reform proposed, in order to separate those whom such a plan would satisfy from, those who would be satisfied with none; but who, I contend, by means of this, would only labour to attain the complete object of their wishes in the annihilation of the constitution. Those men who treat parliament as an usurpation, and monarchy as an invasion of the rights of man, would not receive a reform which was not the recognition of their right, and which they would consider as vitiated if conveyed in any other shape. Though such men had availed themselves of the aid of those who supported parliamen-

tary reform on other grounds, would they be contented with this species of reform as an ultimate object?

But does the honourable and learned gentleman mean to assume that those who are the friends of moderate reform, (and I know not how such a wish has been expressed at all) must remain confounded with those whom no reform will satisfy, unless some measure like the present is adopted? Where has such a wish for moderate reform been expressed? If those who are even thought to entertain sentiments favourable to that cause, have cherished them in silence, if they have abstained from pressing them at a moment when they would have served only to promote the views of those who wished to annihilate, not to reform, is it to be apprehended that any ill effects will ensue, unless you adopt some expedient to distinguish the moderate reformer from the desperate foe? Yet this is the main argument of the learned gentleman, which he has put into a thousand different shapes. I do not believe, however, that the temper of moderate reformers will lead them to make common cause with the irreconcilable enemies of the constitution. If there are really many who may be ranked as moderate reformers, it is at least probable that they feel the force of the danger which I have stated; that they think it wiser to check their wishes than to risk the inlet of jacobin principles, and the imprudence of affording to the enemies of the constitution the means of accomplishing its destruction. Has there been, however, any decisive manifestation of their desires, or is there reason to believe, that, disappointed in their wishes, they will be immediately driven beyond the bounds of duty to the constitution? If there is no security that those, whose views have already pointed beyond reform, will be recalled to better sentiments, if there are even certain grounds to believe that they will merely employ any reform that may be introduced, as a step towards realizing their own system, upon what pretence can the present measure be held out as calculated to reconcile those men to the constitution? From the conduct of gentlemen on the other side, it is obvious that they do not conceive any decisive manifestation of the wishes

of the people for a moderate reform being now introduced, to have taken place. My reason for such an opinion is this: we have seen that the gentlemen in opposition have not been deficient in their efforts to procure every expression of the public concurrence in the objects for which they have contended. From their own account these efforts have not been unsuccessful; but, supposing that no efforts of theirs had been employed, and that to the spontaneous impulse of the people themselves are to be ascribed the petitions which have been voted in different quarters, to a degree indeed, in their opinion, to decide the sense of the country to be in favour of an immediate peace, and the removal of ministers, it follows, that those who have presented such petitions have not felt, or the exertions of opposition have not been able to excite, any expression of that opinion they have so often urged, that no change of men, without a change of system, would lead to any permanent good.

It does not appear then, that there is any call upon the house to adopt a measure which, so far from being necessary to satisfy men friendly to a moderate reform, they have not, in any shape, expressed a wish to obtain. Before the practical expediency of this measure, then, comes to be discussed, the practical necessity of such a measure must be established. In this proof, however, the honourable and learned gentlemen have failed; I need not, therefore, go into the state of the country to refute the statements of the honourable gentlemen. Indeed, I must observe that every thing urged upon this topic, was nothing more than assertion. The calamities and difficulties under which the country labours, the war with France, and inroads upon the constitution, the profusion of public expenditure, were the topics upon which they insisted, and which they said would have been avoided if parliamentary reform had formerly been adopted. I boldly contend, however, that in the origin of the war, in the efforts to an unparalleled extent which the novelty of the contest, and the nature of the enemy, forced us to exert; that in what they call inroads, and which we contend were necessary bul-

warks for the defence of the constitution, the feelings of the people went uniformly along with the proceedings of parliament. I will venture to assert, without the fear of contradiction, that in no time when the tide of prosperity began to turn in favour of this country, when the nation began to recover from the struggles and from the burdens of the American war, when, year after year, the sources of public wealth and individual happiness were increasing and extending, had the functions of parliament been more congenial to the feelings of the people, than in the painful yet necessary struggles to which we were obliged to submit in the present contest. That the nation has suffered, during the progress of the war, many and serious calamities, I do not dispute; calamities, however, much less severe in their effects than those which have been undergone by countries acting upon a different system.

It has indeed been urged, and with no ordinary degree of perseverance, that the voice of the nation is against the proceedings of government: that, however, is more a matter of opinion than of fact; and every man will naturally judge of the credit that ought to attach to such an assertion, from the sentiments which are expressed in the circle of his own acquaintance, and from his personal inquiries on the subject. But I will undertake to say, that at the present moment, amidst all the difficulties and embarrassments, unavoidably occasioned by the vigorous prosecution of hostilities, the system pursued by parliament in support of the measures of government, is the system of the people; and parliament at no period possessed in a more ample degree the confidence of the country than it does now. [Here Mr. Fox shewed some signs of dissent.] The honourable gentleman may be disposed to controvert this opinion, but I am sure he cannot maintain the contrary with more sincerity or more perfect conviction, than I advance what I now assert. The right honourable gentleman, the house will recollect, was accustomed to assert last session of parliament, with equal boldness and vehemence as now, that the sense of the country was against the system of ministers. Good God! Where can the honourable gentleman

have lived? In what remote corner of the country can he have passed his time? What great public question can he state, upon which the public have not evinced a great degree of interest, as great as that shewn upon any former occasion? On the contrary, if ever there was a period which we should select, as the one in which the attention of the public was the most turned to public affairs, it was precisely that period in which the learned gentleman has described the public to have lost all interest in the deliberations of parliament.

I know it is maintained that parliament does not represent the great body of the nation, and that the result of general elections gives no striking character or impressive feature of the sentiments of the people: but I desire it may also be recollected, whether there are not many leading instances, and particular circumstances attendant on general elections, that go strongly to express the opinion entertained by the constituent body; and, taking up the consideration in that point of view, I do insist, and am convinced the position cannot be objected to, that the approbation given by those who had been members of the last parliament, to the commencement and prosecution of the war, were strong and powerful recommendations in their favour at the late general elections. I will for a moment, pursuing this argument, request the house to take the parliamentary representation as it has been stated and recommended by the honourable gentleman*. I will desire the honourable gentleman himself to look for an instant to his own statement of the proposed additional representation of the counties, and then candidly decide, whether he can argue that the sense of the people was not in a great degree to be collected at general elections? It is submitted in that statement, to extend the number of county members from ninety-two to one hundred and thirteen; the augmentation, therefore, did not consist of many; and does the honourable gentleman intend to except the ninety-two former members by a general proscription? or will he pretend to say, that the system

* Mr. Grey.

of counties, as it stands at present in point of representation, goes for nothing? Certainly he cannot undertake to advance such an argument, and so evidently inconsistent with his own plan of reform. If, therefore, the one hundred and thirteen members proposed by the honourable gentleman to represent the counties, would express the true sense of the people, it cannot be denied on the same grounds, that the ninety-two who were elected by their constituents, were in a very considerable proportion the organs of the public opinion. The arguments therefore adduced by the honourable gentleman go against his own declaration, that the sense of the people was not the sense of parliament; and that sense had been fully manifested in favour of the war at the general elections. Since, therefore, I recollect the former declaration of the honourable gentleman at the end of the last session of parliament, that parliament did not possess the confidence of the people, am I to be discouraged now, after the general election, from saying that they actually did enjoy that confidence? But that is not the only statement which I can make in justification of this assertion. I will appeal to the proceedings in great and populous cities, as well as in the city of London, in which the opinions of gentlemen on the other side of the house, with respect to parliament not possessing the confidence of the people, were as strongly refuted, on a fair poll, by a vast majority of the electors, as by the elections for the counties to which he has referred. It consequently appears that the honourable gentleman has not specific ground to proceed on; and that he has totally failed in the foundation of his assertion, that parliament does not enjoy the public confidence. The learned gentleman has in the fanciful flights of his eloquence, pushed his objects farther than his honourable friend; for he has not only said, that parliament has lost the confidence of the people, but that the proceedings of parliament have no effect whatever on the public mind.

The learned gentleman, however, wished to unite two classes of persons very opposite in their pursuits. He desires to reconcile those, who by the very nature of their principles are alto-

gether irreconcilable ; those whose political doctrines are known to be inimical to legal government, and those who are distinguished by the moderation of their tenets. With respect to the moderates, it could not be too minutely attended to by the house, that they propose no plan of reform whatever ; that they prefer no complaints ; that they set out with no petition on that subject ; and is it proper or reasonable that the house should spontaneously give what had not been even demanded ? With regard to the other persons alluded to by the learned gentleman, the house, by agreeing to what has been urged in their favour, would give them not merely what they claim, but what they demand as an absolute right, and what is in reality the first step to the accomplishment of their real views. That the present moment should be a time for the measure of reform appears rather inconsistent, when it is admitted by the learned gentleman himself that radical discontent is prevalent in the country, and when it is undeniable, that the men who talk of liberty aim merely at licentiousness, and set up the name of reform as a disguise to mask their revolutionary projects, and as the first step to their acknowledged system of innovation. Concessions to such men, at such a time, would be impolitic, would be fatal, would be absurd. The house also, by agreeing to the arguments of the learned gentleman, would grant what could not be of any use to one set of men, and what would be productive of great mischief to the other description. Such concessions, I will maintain, are not warranted by the sound maxims of philosophy, nor to be measured by the numerous examples drawn from the history of the world.

The honourable gentleman* has talked highly of the blessings which are to result to mankind from the establishment of French liberty ; and because new lights have appeared to set off the doctrine of freedom, this house is therefore to alter their principles of government, and to accommodate themselves to the new order of things. The system of French liberty is represented as a new light diffusing itself over all the world, and spreading in every

* Mr. Grey.

region happiness and improvement. Good God ! is the house to be told, after the benefits which have been derived from the revolution in this country, that other and more essential benefits are to be added by adopting the principles of the French revolution ? From such lights, however, I hope we shall ever protect this constitution, as against principles inconsistent with any government. If we are to be relieved from any evils under which we may at present labour, by means of this new light, I for one beg leave to enter my solemn protest against the idea. The doctrines upon which it is founded, are, as I have already said, false, shallow, and presumptuous, more absurd than the most pestilent theories that were ever engendered by the disordered imagination of man ; more hostile to the real interests of mankind, to national prosperity, to individual happiness, to intellectual and moral improvement, than any tyranny by which the human species was ever afflicted. And, for this new luminary, shall we abandon the polar star of the British constitution, by which we have been led to happiness and glory, by which the country has supported every danger which it has been called upon to encounter, and risen superior to every difficulty by which it has been assailed ?

But, independent of these general grounds on which I have opposed this motion, I have no difficulty in stating that the particular measure appears liable to so many objections, that in no circumstances could I have given it my assent. Indeed I could as little concur in the plan of the honourable gentleman as in a proposal for universal suffrage : how near it approaches to that system I shall not now discuss. The honourable gentleman, on a former occasion, has said, that he would rather have universal suffrage than no reform. The learned gentleman, however, disclaims universal suffrage, when asserted as a matter of right. Certainly, indeed, some people have reason to complain of the learned gentleman who, in supporting a plan of reform on grounds of practical advantage, refuses that universal suffrage to which he has no objection on practical grounds, merely because it is asked as a matter of right. He will, however, find it difficult to

reconcile that practical expedience with the new light of general freedom which has so unexpectedly broken in upon the world. The proposition, however, is neither more nor less than, with the exception of one fifth, to abolish the whole system of the representation of this country, as it has been formed by charter or by parliamentary arrangement, as it has been moulded by time and experience, as it has been blended with our manners and customs, without regard to the rights or compensations, or to the general effect of modifications. All these are to be swept away, and a numerical scale of representation to be substituted in its place; the country is to be divided into districts, and every householder, paying taxes, is to vote; thus a system would be introduced little short of universal suffrage. On what experience, on what practice is this gigantic scale of numerical representation to be introduced? In former plans the variety of the modes of representation was admitted to be proof, how much better time and circumstances may mould and regulate representation than any institutions founded on reasonings *a priori*, and how necessary it was to give way to the effects of such experience. It is not the harsh uniformity of principles, each pushed to its extreme, but the general complexion arising out of the various shades, which forms the harmony of the representation, and the practical excellence of the constitution, capable of improving itself consistently with its fundamental principles. Who will say that this beautiful variety may not have contributed to the advantage of the whole? That system was practical, and experience has confirmed the excellence of it, but the present plan goes the whole length of destroying all the existing representation, with the exception only of the county members (why they alone are excepted I am at a loss to conceive), and bringing all to one system. Are the gentlemen who propose this system aware of the benefits resulting from a varied state of representation, and are they ready at once to resign them?

It never was contended that the inequality of the representation has been attended with any practical disadvantage, that the interest of Yorkshire was neglected because it sent only two mem-

bers to parliament, or that Birmingham and Manchester experienced any ill consequences from having no representatives. How does it appear that universal suffrage is better than if the right to vote be founded on numerical, or even alphabetical arrangement? There is no practice, certainly no recognised practice, for its basis. The experiment proposed is new, extensive, overturning all the ancient system, and substituting something in its stead without any theoretical advantage, or any practical recommendation. In the mixed representation which now subsists, the scot and lot elections are those which have been chiefly objected to, and the honourable gentleman opposite to me formerly agreed with me in opinion, that burgage tenures and small corporations were even less exceptionable than open burghs with small qualifications. Yet this extension of small qualifications, from which it has been a general complaint that much confusion, debauchery, and abuse at elections arose, forms the principal feature in the honourable gentleman's plan.

Upon these grounds, therefore, looking seriously at the situation of the country, examining facts with attention, unless we would seal our own dishonour, unless we would belie the testimony of our constituents, we must dissent from the reasons on which the necessity of this proposition is founded. We ought to resist the specific plan which the honourable gentleman has offered, unless we would renounce the tried system of our representation, for a plan at once highly exceptionable in theory, and totally unsupported by experience.

The motion was negatived;

Ayes ----- 91

Noes ----- 256

June 2, 1797.

MR. PITT moved the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message relative to the Mutiny in the Fleet —

“GEORGE R.

“It is with the deepest concern his Majesty acquaints the House of Commons, that the conduct of the crews of some of his ships now at the Nore, in persisting in the most violent and treasonable acts of mutiny and disobedience, notwithstanding the full extension to them of all the benefits which had been accepted with gratitude by the rest of his Majesty's fleet, and notwithstanding the repeated offers of his Majesty's gracious pardon, on their returning to their duty, have compelled his Majesty to call on all his faithful subjects to give their utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings. His Majesty has directed a copy of the proclamation which he has issued for this purpose, to be laid before the House; and he cannot doubt that his parliament will adopt, with readiness and decision, every measure which can tend, at this important conjuncture, to provide for the public security. And his Majesty particularly recommends it to the consideration of Parliament, to make more effectual provision for the prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's naval service; or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces, by sea or land, from their duty and allegiance to him; and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and safety of the British Empire.

G. R.”

The message being read, MR. PITT spoke to the following effect:—

Important as the present occasion is, I feel that it will not be necessary for me to detain the house with a long detail upon the subject of the gracious communication from the throne, which has now been read to us. By that communication we learn that all the benefit of his Majesty's gracious favour, which restored satisfaction to part of his Majesty's forces, was attended with every mark of duty and gratitude by that part, and was extended to the whole of his Majesty's fleet; but that, nevertheless, there are now at the Nore deluded persons who have persisted in disobedience, and proceeded to open acts of mutiny and disorder, although all the same benefits have been allowed to them; the

same liberal allowance which was agreed upon by parliament, and his Majesty's most gracious pardon, have been offered to them in the same generous manner as it was to those who have returned to their duty. We have the mortification now to learn that mutiny is carried on to the most dangerous and criminal excess, to such a length, that the persons concerned in it have gone into open and undisguised hostility against his Majesty's forces acting under orders and commands from regular authority. Much as we must deplore such events, much as we must feel them as an aggravation of the public difficulties with which we have to contend, yet I am sure we all feel it to be the duty of the house of commons to shew to its constituents, and to the world at large, that there is no difficulty which they will not meet with firmness and resolute decision; that we will take measures to extricate the country from its difficulties in a manner that is worthy of the representatives of a great, a brave, a powerful, and a free people. I am persuaded that, under our present circumstances, we can have no hesitation in laying at the foot of the throne an address of assurance, that we will afford his Majesty every effectual support in our power; that we will counteract, as far as we can, so fatal an example as has, by the most consummate wickedness, been set to his Majesty's naval force; that we will shew that we feel a just indignation against a conduct so unworthy of, so inconsistent with, the manly and generous character of British seamen; that we feel resentment at so ungrateful a return to the generosity of a liberal parliament, and the mildness and benignity of an illustrious throne. I trust that we shall recollect what our duty is in such a conjuncture. I trust too, that as these late proceedings are utterly repugnant to the real spirit of the British sailor, contrary to the conduct which has established the glory of the British navy, and the renown of the British nation, it will appear that it was not in the hearts of British seamen that such mutinous principles originated. I trust that we shall shew also, that if there are among us those who are enemies to the fundamental interests

of this country, to its glory, to its safety, and to its existence as a nation, whose malignity is directed to the honour and even existence of our navy, who carry on their diabolical artifice by misrepresentation of facts, to pervert the dispositions and change the principles of the seamen, by instilling into their minds false alarms and apprehensions, and prevail upon them to do acts contrary to their instinct, and that too when they are called upon to contend with an enemy,—I trust, I say, that if there be among us such foes, they may be detected and dealt with as they deserve. Our indignation should be more active against the seducers than the seduced and misguided.

Whether, according to the existing law against the open attempts that we have seen made upon another branch of his Majesty's service to shake its loyalty, but which, to the honour of that body, remains unmoved, and I trust is immoveable, we possess power enough to punish, as they deserve, such wicked offenders, may be a matter perhaps of doubt. I shall, however, instantly proceed to that part of the recommendation in his Majesty's message, and to state my ideas upon the law against persons who shall excite his Majesty's forces to mutiny or disobedience. It is not necessary for me to enter now into particulars upon that subject; but I feel it my duty to declare, that if the address which I shall propose shall meet, as I hope and confidently trust it will, the unanimous sense of the house, I shall immediately move for leave to bring in a bill for the better prevention of the crime I have already stated. There is, I am persuaded, in this house, but one sense of the great guilt of this offence, of the notoriety of its practice, and of the danger of its consequences; in short, there exists every ground upon which penal law can be applied to any offence, viz. the mischief of the act itself, and the frequency of its commission. The remedy which I mean to propose for the consideration of parliament, will, I trust, be sufficiently efficacious to attain its object, without o'erstepping the moral guilt and real malignity of the crime. While, however, we all feel it to be our duty to enter

on the consideration of such legislative provision, while parliament is not wanting in its duty at such a crisis of public affairs, I trust also that we shall not be disappointed in our expectation of the spirit of the public collectively or individually; that they will not be wanting in their exertions in such a crisis; that they will be animated, collectively and individually, with a spirit that will give energy and effect to their exertions; that every man who boasts, and is worthy of the name of an Englishman, will stand forth in the metropolis, and in every part of the kingdom, to maintain the authority of the laws, and enforce obedience to them, to oppose and counteract the machinations of the disaffected, and to preserve a due principle of submission to legal authority. I trust that all the inhabitants of the kingdom will unite in one common defence against internal enemies, to maintain the general security of the kingdom, by providing for the local security of each particular district; that we shall all remember, that by so doing we shall give the fullest scope to his Majesty's forces against foreign enemies, and also the fullest scope to the known valour and unshaken fidelity of the military force of the kingdom against those who shall endeavour to disturb its internal tranquillity. Such are the principles which I feel, and upon which I shall act for myself, and such are the principles, and will be the conduct, I hope, of every man in this house and out of it; such are the sentiments that are implanted in us all; such the feelings that are inherent in the breast of every Englishman. I should insult the house by shewing that I distrusted its character, and the character of the country, if I said more, and I should have neglected my duty if I had said less. I now move, Sir,

“ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message:

“ To express to his Majesty the concern and indignation which we must feel in common with his Majesty, at the heinous and criminal conduct of the crews of some of his Majesty's ships,

notwithstanding the offer so repeatedly made to them of his Majesty's most gracious pardon, and the proofs of the paternal regard of his Majesty, and of the liberality of parliament, which they have received in common with the rest of his Majesty's fleet.

“ To assure his Majesty, that we are ready and determined to afford to his Majesty our utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings, and to adopt every measure which can tend, at this conjuncture, to provide for the public security: with this view we shall proceed, without delay, in pursuance of the recommendation of his Majesty, to consider of such further provision as it may be necessary to make, for the more effectual prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite mutiny in any part of his Majesty's forces, or to withdraw them from their duty and allegiance, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire:

“ That we have the fullest reliance, that all his Majesty's faithful subjects, from sentiments of loyalty and attachment to his Majesty, and a just anxiety for their dearest interests, will be eager to manifest, at so important a crisis, a full determination to contribute, on every occasion, their utmost exertions for the support of legal authority, the maintenance of peace and order, and the general protection and defence of his Majesty's kingdoms.”

A general sentiment of unanimity appearing through the House,

MR. PITT, in his reply, declared,

That in expressing his anxiety for unanimity in voting the proposed address, he was influenced indeed by the most important considerations. He wished for such an unanimity as would lay a just foundation for future prosperity, for one on which he placed the most favourable augury, the unanimity of the nation at large—an unanimity not in support of administration, but in support of the constitution itself, and of all those laws by which it

was guarded. The country was called upon to be unanimous in a contest which embraced every thing that was most valuable to its dearest interests. Whatever difference of opinion might prevail in the minds of gentlemen on former points, there could not exist a shadow of doubt with respect to the present question. It was now indispensably necessary for them to unite in one common cause; it was incumbent on them to consolidate their efforts, to reconcile their different views, to concentrate their individual exertions, and to give energy and vigour to the laws, without which it was impossible there could be any solid happiness. It was not merely by declarations that they were bound to proceed, but by a spirit and promptitude of action, and a firm resolution and readiness to support the execution of the laws by military subordination and legal obedience. It became their duty to give a resistless efficacy to that conduct through every corner of the metropolis, and through every part of the kingdom. By such measures they could alone disappoint the dark and malignant efforts of the enemy; and he was proud to say that to so glorious an unanimity there was nothing that he would not cheerfully sacrifice. He therefore hoped that nothing would in fact be found in the latter part of the address, that could in the slightest degree tend to destroy the unanimity of the house in agreeing to it.

When he came to consider the nature and the terms of it, he was completely at a loss to find one word that could appear objectionable. The house could not be supposed to pledge themselves particularly to agree to the bill which was about to be brought in. They merely pledged themselves to this; that, in pursuance of his Majesty's recommendation to parliament to make more effectual provision, for the purpose of strengthening the present laws which related to military obedience and discipline, they would consider of the propriety of those measures which might be deemed necessary for that specific object. The house, therefore, in voting for the address, went no farther than to declare, that they would act in compliance with his Majesty's recommendation, but did not preclude themselves from taking into their mature

consideration the nature of the bill, nor did they, by such a vote, debar themselves from withholding their assent to any matter that might appear objectionable in it. But though he was so particularly anxious to secure unanimity in passing the address, he did not, with a view of obtaining that desirable measure, wish to conceal or protract the delivery of his sentiments on any part of it. His conviction of the propriety of the bill was formed on the ground of the greatest necessity, and strongly impressed with the idea that it was absolutely requisite to give dispatch to the operation of it, he should move, the moment the address was carried, for leave to present the bill, and if it was then agreed to, he should also propose the second reading of it to take place the next day. He also thought it necessary to premise, that the further discussion of the bill would be carried on as speedily as possible.

An honourable gentleman,* who had spoken against the latter part of the address, declared, that he reserved to himself the liberty of opposing the bill. A declaration of that nature was by no means necessary, because no gentleman could be supposed to pledge himself to measures which he had in all instances the freedom of discussing and disagreeing with. He would not undertake to convince the scruples of the honourable gentleman on every point which was contained in the latter part of the address, but he entertained an opinion that he was competent to do so on some points which appeared peculiarly satisfactory to himself. The provisions of the bill did not go beyond the necessity of the case, and this statement he would undertake in the most direct and positive manner to support; but if the honourable gentleman meant, that it was requisite to prove the existence of particular acts on board each of his Majesty's ships which were then in a state of mutiny, he should freely declare that he would undertake no such thing. He took the ground of proceeding with the bill to be derived from a plain and fair opinion, on which the public mind and parliament might be fully satisfied as in

* Mr. Hobhouse.

many other cases of equal notoriety. That the speeches of this or that emissary of faction and general anarchy had produced mutiny in particular ships, he would not pretend to say; but the public opinion with respect to the disorganized state of these ships, and the causes which had first produced the disobedience, and continued to uphold it, was founded on grounds unhappily too notorious in all instances, too much felt in some cases, and too strongly proved, but fortunately defeated in others. On these grounds he should therefore propose the bill. He thought it necessary, in consequence of what had fallen from some gentlemen, to submit these candid statements which decided his conviction on the propriety of the measure, and he begged pardon of the house for having troubled them a second time, but he felt from the great importance of the subject, from the pressing exigence of the case, and from the present crisis of public affairs, that it was the duty of every man zealously to unite in a measure, which, by securing the obedience and discipline of his Majesty's forces, preserved the country from the efforts of its domestic and foreign enemies.

The question on the address was put and agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

MR. PITT then rose again,

To move, he said, for leave to bring in a bill for the better prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service; or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance to him, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire. He had already stated, he observed, that if any person required substantial evidence of any individual malpractices to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service, he was not at present in the possession of the power to produce it; but he trusted it would be enough for the satisfaction of the house to authorise the introduction of the bill, to state the necessity on general grounds. It would be enough, he conceived, to obtain their sanction, and their approbation of the measures he was

about to recommend, if the frequency, the malignity, and the universality of seditious practices were so notorious, and in the daily habit of coming to the knowledge of every person both in and out of that house, that no reasonable man could dissent from his Majesty's declaration of the necessity to provide for security in future. It might be more immediately his duty to state, as a convincing proof of the existence of one active, uniform, and wide extended plan of sedition to seduce his Majesty's forces from their duty and allegiance, that the discontents did not originate with any single individual, that they were not confined to one corner of the kingdom, nor contracted in one circle of complaint, but that they had manifested themselves in different detached parts, were working at the same time, and in different places on the same principles, and branched out into so many fresh ramifications of complaint, that no person could foresee where they would end. Many and various had been the attempts to excite this disaffection, by false, insidious, and calumniating means, sometimes provoking rebellion by emissaries at secret hours, sometimes by misrepresentations, and other artful means, and at others by dispersing hand bills wherever opportunity presented itself or any expectation of success in their pursuits could be indulged, to detach the soldiers also from their duty; so that the engines of sedition had been no less busily and unremittingly persevering on shore, where to the honour of the soldiery he had the happiness to say, they had failed in their effects, than in the navy where they had unfortunately prevailed. Here then, he had an opportunity of observing, that gentlemen needed only to connect the discontents on board the fleet with the other species of sedition upon shore, to pronounce them to be the operations of one fatal and too-well digested system; for that they were not the spontaneous combinations of the seamen, that they were not the effects of accident, nor the effusion of one solitary and unconnected discontent, was demonstrated by the conformity of transactions at Newcastle, at Nottingham, at Maidstone, at Canterbury, at Salisbury, and many other places, where the same species of hand bills had been scattered and dif-

fused, accompanied by rumours echoed and re-echoed of the most false and scandalous nature, and where, in some unhappy instances, a few deluded or ill-minded people had set the same melancholy example. A more studied system could not offer itself to the thought of any man; a more practicable plan of treason to provoke a general rebellion could never be attempted to be put in execution.

From such specimens therefore it was evident the sedition was extensive enough to prove it to be systematic, and dangerous enough to make precaution requisite. Could any person doubt the existence of some treacherous conspiracy? Could any person wish to have a proof of its existence when its existence had already been attested by numerous instances of loyalty and fidelity in the soldiery, who with honest and honourable indignation, had not only been wise and resolute enough to repel it, but had also voluntarily stepped forward in the most liberal and manly manner to discover the offenders? With this notoriety of a disgraceful system to corrupt one service, where it had so nobly been defeated, how could any man doubt of its insinuation and its influence in another?—A quarter too where such opinions and such measures were the least congenial to the natural dispositions of the persons who professed them. The whole affair was of that colour and description which proved it to be not of a native growth, and left no hesitation in the mind of any thinking man to determine whence it was imported; but on the contrary, it was so uniform and particular in its species, and so like every sample of what they had witnessed in another country, that there was no doubt the propagators of it there had executed a previous determination to transplant it into every soil that would receive it. Could any man for a moment doubt, he again demanded, that the same engines had been at work in this country to produce disorder and rebellion, which had been elsewhere so fatally effectual? Could any man doubt it with the knowledge of the frustrated endeavours in the army, and the suspicion of the same endeavours in the navy? That knowledge and that suspicion was, in his opinion, all the proof the legislature could require. But

if that were deemed sufficient proof, and upon that evidence it was thought not only prudent but absolutely necessary to confine its operations, and, if possible, inflict a penalty on the offenders, no man could doubt but its operations would have been confined within some bounds of restriction long ago, if the penal laws were competent to recognize such machinations and punish the delinquents. The boldness, the malignancy, the frequency of the offences, all tended to confute that proposition.

But he would put it to the decision of every man who heard him, Were the laws, now in being, sufficient to deter men from the prosecution of their evil purposes? That they had not deterred them was plain from the mutinous proceedings still existing; and as they did not deter them from pushing those proceedings further, it was a reasonable ground for the presumption that the laws in force were not sufficient. Look at the statute laws, find out their origin and examine their extent. Had the statute law ever endeavoured to search out every possible offence, and provide for its prevention and its punishment? Certainly not. The statute laws of this country were not the result of an original deliberative systematic code, but the natural effects of the commission of crimes, arising from their frequency and heinousness, and proportioning the penalties accordingly. They grew up from the offences which they afterwards controlled, and their character and complexion distinguished them to be the produce of different periods. What then would be the principle of any one's argument who should contend, that, because no particular law nor any particular penalty had been yet provided by the legislature, none should be provided? His argument would in such a case apply just as much, if he were to contend that no law or punishment should be in force against parricide, because, by referring to the statute books, he might find, that there was a time when no such law or penalty existed. He rested the introduction of this bill, therefore, upon the general footing of common law; and as the offence exceeded the provision for subduing the ordinary species of treason, and was in its nature of a particular and extraordinary description, he should act upon a principle of the common

law, in which a proof of the expediency to alter or extend a particular law was given by this circumstance. Formerly, to entice any of his Majesty's forces to desert from his service was only a misdemeanour; but soon after the accession of the family of Hanover to the throne of these dominions, that law was revised and altered, and any person found guilty of that offence, incurred an additional penalty. Would any man pretend to say then, that a person found guilty of enticing any of his Majesty's forces to desert, should incur a heavy penalty, and that they who enticed his forces, not to desert, but to employ their arms in breach of their allegiance should go unpunished? Indisputably not!—And for that reason he had undertaken to provide such a remedy as to him appeared most likely to prevail. He regretted that the offences were so secret and so complex in their nature, that it was impossible at present to define them, and under those circumstances he was sorry to add, he could not propose any measure so definite as he wished. In point of moral guilt, the persons who had been so artful and so active in their operations, to seduce the forces from their allegiance, and excite them to rebellion at so dangerous a crisis of the public safety as the present, were the worst traitors to society, and certainly deserved the highest and most exemplary punishment; but on the other hand, as the precise nature and extent could not be determined, he thought the medium would be the best and most serviceable way to proceed against them.

Having said thus much, both by way of proof of the necessity of some restriction, and his opinion of what that restriction ought to be, he should now come to the description of the remedy he intended to propose. What he had to propose then was, to treat any traiterous attempt to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service, or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance, as an aggravated species of misdemeanour, leaving to the discretion of the court the power of inflicting not only the penalties of fine and imprisonment, as in other cases of misdemeanour, but, as circumstances might require, the penalties of banishment and transportation also.

This was a short statement of the measures he meant to propose, and wishing to be cautious how he contributed to extend the criminal laws of this country, he was willing to press his restriction of the offences he had described, in this shape in preference to any other. The penalties for such offences could not, in his opinion, press too much, consistently with the future security and happiness; and in the mode he had suggested to the consideration of the house, he hoped and trusted they would not be found to press too little. He therefore moved for leave to bring in the bill.

After some further discussion leave was granted, and the bill was brought in, read a first and second time, and ordered to be committed the following day.

November 10, 1797.

The order of the day being read for the House to take into consideration the papers, which had been laid before them by his Majesty's direction, relative to the late negotiation at Lisle, and the address of the House of Lords being also read, Mr. Dundas moved "that the House do concur with their Lordships in that address."

After Sir John Sinclair and Lord Temple had spoken, the former of whom moved an amendment to the address,

MR. PITT rose, and delivered his sentiments as follows:

Sir—Having come to this house with the firm persuasion, that there never existed an occasion, when the unanimous concurrence of the house might be more justly expected than on a proposal, to agree in the sentiments contained in the address which has been read, I must confess myself considerably disappointed, in some degree, even by the speech of my noble relation, (much as I rejoice in the testimony which he has given of his talents and abilities,) and still more by the speech of the honourable baronet, and by the amendment which he has moved. I cannot agree with the noble lord in the extent to which he has stated

his sentiments, that we ought to rejoice that peace was not made; much less, Sir, can I feel desirous to accept, on the part of myself or my colleagues, either from my noble kinsman, or any other person, the approbation which he was pleased to express, of the manner in which we have concluded the negociation. *We* have not concluded the negociation—the negociation has been concluded by others; we have not been suffered to continue it; our claim to merit, if we have any, our claim to the approbation of our country is, that we persisted in every attempt to conduct that negociation to a pacific termination, as long as our enemies left us, not the prospect but the chance or possibility of doing so, consistent with our honour, our dignity, and our safety. We lament and deplore the disappointment of the sincere wishes which we felt, and of the earnest endeavours which we employed; yet we are far from suffering those sentiments to induce us to adopt the unmanly line of conduct that has been recommended by the honourable baronet; this is not the moment to dwell only on our disappointment, to suppress our indignation, or to let our courage, our constancy, and our determination, be buried in the expressions of unmanly fear, or unavailing regret. Between these two extremes, it is, that I trust our conduct is directed; and in calling upon the house to join in sentiments between those extremes, I do trust, that if we cannot have the unanimous opinion, we shall have the general and ready concurrence both of the house and of the country.

Sir, before I trouble the house, which I am not desirous of doing at length, with a few points which I wish to recapitulate, let me first call to your minds the general nature of the amendment which the honourable baronet has, under these circumstances, thought fit to propose, and the general nature of the observations by which he introduced it. He began with deploring the calamities of war, on the general topic, that all war is calamitous. Do I object to this sentiment? No: but is it our business at a moment when we feel that the continuance of that war is owing to the animosity, the implacable animosity of our enemy, to the inveterate and insatiable ambition of the present fran-

tic government of France, not of the people of France, as the honourable baronet unjustly stated it—is it our business at that moment to content ourselves with merely lamenting in common-place terms the calamities of war, and forgetting that it is part of the duty which, as representatives of the people, we owe to our government and our country, to state that the continuance of those evils upon ourselves, and upon France too, is the fruit only of the conduct of the enemy; that it is to be imputed to them, and not to us?

Sir, the papers which were ordered to be laid on the table have been in every gentleman's hand, and on the materials which they furnish we must be prepared to decide. Can there be a doubt, that all the evils of war, whatever may be their consequences, are to be imputed solely to his Majesty's enemies? Is there any man here prepared to deny, that the delay in every stage of the negociation, and its final rupture, are proved to be owing to the evasive conduct, the unwarrantable pretensions, the inordinate ambition, and the implacable animosity of the enemy? I will shortly state what are the points, though it is hardly necessary that I should state them, for they speak loudly for themselves, on which I would rest that proposition; but if there is any man who doubts it, is it the honourable baronet? Is it he who makes this amendment, leaving out every thing that is honourable to the character of his own country, and seeming to court some new complaisance on the part of the French directory?—the honourable baronet, who, as soon as he has stated the nature of his amendment, makes the first part of his speech a charge against his Majesty's ministers, for even having commenced the negociation in the manner, and under the circumstances in which they did commence it—who makes his next charge, their having persevered in it, when violations of form and practice were insisted upon in the earliest stage of it? Does he discover that the French government, whom we have accused with insincerity, have been sincere from the beginning to the end of the negociation? Or, after having accused his Majesty's ministers for commencing and persevering

in it, is the honourable baronet so afraid of being misconstrued into an idea of animosity against the people of France, that he must disguise the truth, must do injustice to the character and cause of his own country, and leave unexplained the cause of the continuance of this great contest? Let us be prepared to probe that question to the bottom, to form our opinion upon it, and to render our conduct conformable to that opinion. This, I conceive, to be a manly conduct, and, especially at such a moment, to be the indispensable duty of the house. But let not the honourable baronet imagine there is any ground for his apprehension, that by adopting the language of the address, which ascribes the continuance of the war to the ambition of the enemy, we shall declare a system of endless animosity between the nations of Great Britain and France. I say directly the contrary. He who scruples to declare, that in the present moment the government of France are acting as much in contradiction to the known wishes of the French nation, as to the just pretensions and anxious wishes of the people of Great Britain—he who scruples to declare them the authors of this calamity, deprives us of the consolatory hope which we are inclined to cherish, of some future change of circumstances more favourable to our wishes.

It is a melancholy spectacle, indeed, to see in any country, and on the ruin of any pretence of liberty however nominal, shallow, or delusive, a system of tyranny erected, the most galling, the most horrible, the most undisguised in all its parts and attributes that has stained the page of history, or disgraced the annals of the world; but it would be much more unfortunate, if when we see that the same cause carries desolation through France, which extends disquiet and fermentation through Europe, it would be worse, indeed, if we attributed to the nation of France that, which is to be attributed only to the unwarranted and usurped authority which involves them in misery, and would, if unresisted, involve Europe with them in one common ruin and destruction. Do we state this to be animosity on the part of the people of France? Do we state this

in order to raise up an implacable spirit of animosity against that country? Where is one word to that effect in the declaration to which the honourable gentleman has alluded? He complains much of this declaration, because it tends to perpetuate animosity between two nations which one day or other must be at peace—God grant that day may be soon! But what does that declaration express upon the subject? Does it express, that because the present existing government of France has acted as it has acted, we forego the wish or renounce the hope that some new situation may lead to happier consequences? On the contrary, his Majesty's language is distinctly this: "While this determination continues to prevail on the part of his enemies, his Majesty's earnest wishes and endeavours to restore peace to his subjects must be fruitless; but his sentiments remain unaltered; he looks with anxious expectation to the moment when the government of France may shew a temper and spirit in any degree corresponding with his own." I wish to know whether words can be found in the English language which more expressly state the contrary sentiment to that which the honourable baronet imputes; they not only disclaim animosity against the people of France in consequence of the conduct of its rulers, but do not go the length of declaring, that after all this provocation, even with the present rulers, all treaty is impracticable. Whether it is probable, that acting on the principles upon which they have acquired their power, and while that power continues, they will listen to any system of moderation or justice at home or abroad, it is not now necessary to discuss; but for one, I desire to express my cordial concurrence in the sentiment, so pointedly expressed in that passage of the declaration, in which his Majesty, notwithstanding all the provocation he has received, and even after the recent successes, which, by the blessing of Providence, have attended his arms, declares his readiness to adhere to the same moderate terms and principles which he proposed at the time of our greatest difficulties, and to conclude peace on that ground, if it can now be obtained, even with this very government.

I am sensible, that while I am endeavouring to vindicate his Majesty's servants against the charges of the honourable baronet, which are sufficiently, however, refuted by the early part of his own speech, I am incurring, in some degree, the censure of the noble lord to whom I before alluded. According to his principles and opinions, and of some few others in this country, it is matter of charge against us that we even harbour in our minds at this moment, a wish to conclude peace upon the terms which we think admissible with the present rulers of France. I am not one of those who can or will join in that sentiment. I have no difficulty in repeating what I stated before, that in their present spirit, after what they have said, and still more, after what they have done, I can entertain little hope of so desirable an event. I have no hesitation in avowing, for it would be idleness and hypocrisy to conceal it, that for the sake of mankind in general, and to gratify those sentiments which can never be eradicated from the human heart, I should see with pleasure and satisfaction the termination of a government whose conduct, and whose origin is such as we have seen that of the government of France: but that is not the object—that ought not to be the principle of the war, whatever wish I may entertain in my own heart; and whatever opinion I may think it fair or manly to avow, I have no difficulty in stating, that violent and odious as is the character of that government, I verily believe, in the present state of Europe, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, if, by the blessing of Providence, our perseverance, and our resources, should enable us to make peace with France upon terms in which we taint not our character, in which we do not abandon the sources of our wealth, the means of our strength, the defence of what we already possess; if we maintain our equal pretensions, and assert that rank which we are entitled to hold among nations—the moment peace can be obtained on such terms, be the form of government in France what it may, peace is desirable, peace is then anxiously to be sought. But unless it is attained on such terms, there is no extremity of war, there is no extremity of honourable con-

test, that is not preferable to the name and pretence of peace, which must be in reality a disgraceful capitulation, a base, an abject surrender of every thing that constitutes the pride, the safety, and happiness of England.

These, Sir, are the sentiments of my mind on this leading point, and with these sentiments I shape my conduct between the contending opinions of the noble lord and of the honourable baronet. But there is one observation of the honourable baronet on which I must now more particularly remark. He has discovered that we state the directory of France to have been all along insincere, and yet take merit for having commenced a negociation, which we ought never to have commenced without being persuaded of their sincerity. This supposed contradiction requires but a few words to explain it. I believe that those who constitute the *present* government of France never were sincere for a moment in the negociation: from all the information I have obtained, and from every conjecture I could form, I for one never was so duped as to believe them sincere; but I did believe, and I thought I knew, that there was a general prevailing wish for peace, and a predominant sense of its necessity growing and confirming itself in France, and founded on the most obvious and most pressing motives. I did see a spirit of reviving moderation gradually gaining ground, and opening a way to the happiest alterations in the general system of that country: I did believe that the violence of that portion of the executive government, which, by the late strange revolution of France, unhappily for France itself and for the world, has gained the ascendancy, would have been restrained within some bounds; that ambition must give way to reason; that even phrenzy itself must be controlled and governed by necessity. These were the hopes and expectations I entertained. I did, notwithstanding, feel, that even from the outset, and in every step of that negociation, those who happily had not yet the full power to cut it short in the beginning, who dared not trust the public eye with the whole of their designs, who could

not avow all their principles, unfortunately, nevertheless, did retain from the beginning power enough to control those who had a better disposition; to mix in every part of the negociation, which they could not then abruptly break off, whatever could impede, embarrass, and perplex, in order to throw upon us, if possible, the odium of its failure.

Sir, the system of France is explained by the very objections that are made against our conduct. The violent party could not, as I have stated, at once break off the treaty on their part, but they wished to drive England to the rupture; they had not strength enough to reject all negociation, but they had strength enough to mix in every step those degradations and insults, those inconsistent and unwarranted pretensions in points even of subordinate importance, which reduced ministers to that opinion which I have described; but which they decided in a way that has exposed them to the censure of the honourable baronet. They chose rather to incur the blame of sacrificing punctilios (at some times essential) rather than afford the enemy an opportunity of evading this plain question—Is there any ground, and, if any, what, upon which you are ready to conclude peace? To that point it was our duty to drive them; we have driven them to that point; they would tell us no terms, however exorbitant and unwarrantable, upon which they would be ready to make peace. What would have been the honourable baronet's expedient to avoid this embarrassment? It would have been, as he has this day informed us, an address which he had thought of moving in the last session, and which, indeed, I should have been less surprised had he moved, than if the house had concurred in it; he would have moved that no *projet* should be given in till the enemy were prepared to present a *contre projet*. If it was a great misfortune that that address was not moved, I am afraid some of the guilt belongs to me, because the honourable baronet did suggest such an idea, and I did with great sincerity and frankness tell him, that if he was really a friend to peace, there was no motion he could make so little

calculated to promote that object ; and I did prevail upon the honourable baronet to give up the intention. If I am right in the supposition I have stated ; if I am right in thinking that our great object was to press France to this point, and to put the question—if you have any terms to offer, what are they ?—was there any one way by which we could make it so difficult for them to retain any pretence of a desire of peace, as to speak out ourselves, and call upon them either for agreement, or for modification, or for some other plan in their turn ? By not adopting the honourable baronet's plan, we have put the question beyond dispute, whether peace was attainable at last, and whether our advances would or would not be met on the part of France ; and I shall, to the latest hour of my life, rejoice that we were fortunate enough to place this question in the light which defies the powers of misrepresentation, in which no man can attempt to perplex it, and in which it presents itself this day for the decision of the house and of the nation, and calls upon every individual who has at stake the public happiness and his own, to determine for himself, whether this is or is not a crisis which requires his best exertions in the defence of his country.

To shew which, I shall now proceed, notwithstanding the reproach which has been thrown on our line of conduct, to shew the system even of obstinate forbearance, with which we endeavoured to overcome preliminary difficulties, the determined resolution on our part to overlook all minor obstacles, and to come to the real essence of discussion upon the terms of peace. To shew this, it is not necessary to do more than to call to the recollection of the house the leading parts of the declaration of his Majesty. I mean to leave that part of the subject also without the possibility of doubt, or difference of opinion. It is certainly true, that, even previous to any of the circumstances that related to the preliminary forms of the negociation, the prior conduct of France had offered to any government that was not sincerely and most anxiously bent upon peace, sufficient ground for the continuance of hostilities ; it is true that, in the former negotiation at Paris, Lord Malmesbury was finally sent away, not upon a question of terms of peace, not upon

a question of the cession of European or colonial possessions, but upon the haughty demand of a previous preliminary, which should give up every thing on the part of the allies, and which should leave them afterwards every thing to ask, or rather to require. It is true it closed in nearly the same insulting manner as the second mission; it is true, too, that, subsequent to that period, in the preliminaries concluded between the emperor and France, it was agreed to invite the allies of each party to a congress, which, however, was never carried into execution. It was under these circumstances that his Majesty, in the earnest desire of availing himself of that spirit of moderation which had begun to shew itself in France, determined to renew those proposals which had been before slighted and rejected; but when this step was taken, what was the conduct of those who have gained the ascendancy in France? On the first application to know on what ground they were disposed to negotiate, wantonly, as will be shewn by the sequel, and for no purpose but to prevent even the opening of the conferences, they insisted upon a mode of negotiation very contrary to general usage and convenience, contrary to the mode in which they had terminated war with any of the belligerent powers, and directly contrary to any mode which they themselves afterwards persisted in following in this very negotiation with us. They began by saying, they would receive no proposals for preliminaries, but that conferences should be held for the purpose of concluding at once a definitive treaty.

His Majesty's answer was, that it was his desire to adopt that mode only which was most likely to accelerate the object in view, and the powers of his plenipotentiary would apply to either object, either preliminary or definitive. They appeared content with his answer: but what was the next step? In the simple form of granting a passport for the minister, at the moment they were saying they preferred a definitive peace, because it was the most expeditious; in that very passport, which in all former times has only described the character of the minister, without entering into any thing relating to the terms or mode of negotiating, they insert a condition relative to his powers, and that inconsistent

with what his Majesty had explained to be the nature of the powers he had intended to give, and with which they had apparently been satisfied; they made it a passport not for a minister coming to conclude peace generally, but applicable only to a definitive and separate peace.

This proceeding was in itself liable to the most obvious objection; but it is more important, as an instance to shew how, in the simplest part of the transaction, the untractable spirit of France discovered itself; it throws light upon the subsequent part of the transaction, and shews the inconsistencies and contradictions of their successive pretensions. As to the condition then made in the passport for the first time, that the negotiation should be for a separate peace, his Majesty declared that he had no choice between a definitive and a preliminary treaty, but as to a separate peace, his honour and good faith, with regard to his ally the queen of Portugal, would not permit it: he therefore stated his unalterable determination to agree to no treaty in which Portugal should not be included, expressing at the same time, his readiness that France should treat on the part of Holland and Spain.

On this occasion, the good faith of this country prevailed; the system of violence and despotism was not then ripe, and therefore his Majesty's demand to treat for Portugal was acquiesced in by the directory. They, at the same time, undertook to treat on their part for their allies, Holland and Spain, as well as for themselves, though in the subsequent course of the negotiation they pretended to be without sufficient power to treat for either.

I must here entreat the attention of the house to the next circumstance which occurred. When the firmness of his Majesty, his anxious and sincere desire to terminate the horrors of war, and his uniform moderation, overcame the violence, and defeated the designs of the members of the executive government of France, they had recourse to another expedient—the most absurd, as well as the most unjustifiable: they adverted to the rupture of the former negotiation, as if that rupture was to be imputed to his Majesty; and this insinuation was accompanied with a per-

sonal reflection upon the minister who was sent by his Majesty to treat on the part of this country. His Majesty, looking anxiously as he did to the conclusion of peace, disdained to reply otherwise, than by observing, that this was not a fit topic to be agitated at the moment of renewing a negotiation, and that the circumstances of the transaction were well enough known to Europe and to the world. And the result of this negotiation has confirmed what the former had sufficiently proved, that his Majesty could not have selected, in the ample field of talents which his dominions furnish, any person better qualified to do justice to his sincere and benevolent desire, to promote the restoration of peace, and his firm and unalterable determination to maintain the dignity and honour of his kingdoms.

In spite of these obstacles, and others more minute, the British plenipotentiary at length arrived at Lisle; the full powers were transmitted to the respective governments, and were found unexceptionable, though the supposed defect of these full powers is, three months after, alleged as a cause for the rupture of the negotiation; and what is more remarkable, it did so happen, that the French full powers were, on the face of them, much more limited than ours, for they only enabled the commissioners of the directory to act according to the instructions they were to receive from time to time. On this point it is not necessary now to dwell, but I desire the house to treasure it in their memory, when we come to the question of pretence for the rupture of the negotiation.

Then, Sir, I come to the point in which we have incurred the censure of the honourable baronet, for delivering in on our part a *projet*. To his opinion, I do not subscribe, for the reasons that I stated before. But can there be a stronger proof of his Majesty's sincerity, than his waving so many points important in themselves rather than suffer the negotiation to be broken off? What was our situation? We were to treat with a government, that had in the outset expressed, that they would treat only definitively; and from every part of their conduct which preceded the meeting of our plenipotentiary, and their commissioners, we might have

expected that they would have been prepared to answer our *projet* almost in twenty-four hours after it was delivered. We stood with respect to France in this predicament—we had nothing to ask of them, the question only was, how much we were to give of that which the valour of his Majesty's arms had acquired from them, and from their allies. In this situation, surely, we might have expected, that, before we offered the price of peace, they would at least have condescended to say what were the sacrifices which they expected us to make. But, Sir, in this situation, what species of *projet* was it that was presented by his Majesty's minister? A *projet* the most distinct, the most particular, the most conciliatory and moderate, that ever constituted the first words spoken by any negotiator; and yet of this *projet* what have we heard in the language of the French government? What have we seen dispersed through all Europe by that press in France which knows no sentiments but what French policy dictates? What have we seen dispersed by that English press which knows no other use of English liberty, but servilely to retail and transcribe French opinions? We have been told, that it was a *projet* that refused to embrace the terms of negotiation. Gentlemen have read the papers—how does that fact stand? In the original *projet* we agreed to give up the conquests we had made from France and her allies, with certain exceptions. For those exceptions a blank was left, in order to ascertain whether France was desirous that the exceptions should be divided between her and her allies, or whether she continued to insist upon a complete compensation, and left England to look for compensation only to her allies. France, zealous as she pretends to be for her allies, had no difficulty in authorizing her ministers to declare, that she must retain every thing for herself. This blank was then filled up, and it was then distinctly stated, how little, out of what we had, we demanded to keep; in one sense, it remains a blank still, we did not attempt to preclude France from any other mode of filling it up; but while we stated the utmost extent of our own views, we left open to full explanation whatever points the government of France could desire. We called

upon them, and repeatedly solicited them, to state something as to the nature of the terms which they proposed, if they objected to ours. It was thus left open to modification, alteration, or concession: but this is not the place, this is not the time, in which I am to discuss, whether those terms, in all given circumstances, or in the circumstances of that moment, were or were not the ultimate terms upon which peace ought to be accepted or rejected; if it were once brought to the point when an ultimatum could be judged of, I will not argue whether some great concession might not have been made with the certainty of peace, or whether the terms proposed constituted an offer of peace upon more favourable grounds for the enemy than his Majesty's ministers could justify. I argue not the one question or the other; it would be inconsistent with the public interest and our duty, that we should here state or discuss it; all that I have to discuss, is, whether the terms, upon the face of them, appear honourable, open, frank, distinct, sincere, and a pledge of moderation; and I leave it to the good sense of the house, whether there can exist a difference of opinion upon this point.

Sir, what was it we offered to renounce to France? In one word, all that we had taken from them. What did this consist of?—the valuable, and almost, under all circumstances, the impregnable island of Martinique, various other West-India possessions, St. Lucia, Tobago, the French part of St. Domingo, the settlements of Pondicherry and Chandernagore, all the French factories and means of trade in the East Indies, and the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon; and for what were these renunciations to be made? For peace, and for peace only. And to whom? To a nation which had obtained from his Majesty's dominions in Europe nothing in the course of the war, which had never met our fleets but to add to the catalogue of our victories, and to swell the melancholy lists of their own captures and defeats.—To a power which had never separately met the arms of this country by land, but to carry the glory and prowess of the British name to a higher pitch, and to a country

whose commerce is unheard of, whose navy is annihilated, whose distress, confessed by themselves, (however it may be attempted to be dissembled by their panegyrists in this or any other country,) is acknowledged by the sighs and groans of the people of France, and proved by the expostulations and remonstrances occasioned by the violent measures of its executive government.—Such was the situation in which we stood—such the situation of the enemy when we offered to make these important concessions, as the price of peace. What was the situation of the allies of France? From Spain, who, from the moment she had deserted our cause and enlisted on the part of the enemy, only added to the number of our conquests, and to her own indelible disgrace, we made claim of one island, the island of Trinidad, a claim not resting on the mere naked title of possession, to counterbalance the general European aggrandizement of France, but as the price of something that we had to give by making good the title to the Spanish part of Saint Domingo, which Spain had ceded without right, and which cession could not be made without our guarantee. To Holland, having in our hands the whole means of their commerce, the whole source of their wealth, we offered to return almost all that was valuable and lucrative to them, in the mere consideration of commerce; we desired in return to keep what to them, in a pecuniary view, would be only a burthen, in a political view worse than useless, because they had not the means to keep it; what, had we granted it, would have been a sacrifice, not to them, but to France; what would in future have enabled her to carry on her plan of subjugation against the Eastern possessions of Holland itself, as well as against those of Great Britain. All that we asked, was, not indemnification for what we had suffered, but the means of preserving our own possessions, and the strength of our naval empire; we did this at a time when our enemy was feeling the pressure of war—and who looks at the question of peace without some regard to the relative situation of the country with which you are contending? Look then at their trade;

look at their means ; look at the posture of their affairs ; look at what we hold, and at the means we have of defending ourselves, and our enemy of resisting us, and tell me, whether this offer was or was not a proof of sincerity, and a pledge of moderation. Sir, I should be ashamed of arguing it, I confess ; I am apprehensive we may have gone too far in the first proposals we made, rather than shew any backwardness in the negotiation ; but it is unnecessary to argue this point.

Our proposal was received and allowed by the French plenipotentiaries, and transmitted for the consideration of the Directory ; months had elapsed in sending couriers weekly and daily from Paris to Lisle, and from Lisle to Paris ; they taught us to expect, from time to time, a consideration of this subject, and an explicit answer to our *projet*. But the first attempt of the Directory to negotiate, after having received our *projet*, is worthy of remark ; they required that we, whom they had summoned to a definitive treaty, should stop and discuss preliminary points, which were to be settled without knowing whether, when we had agreed to them all, we had advanced one inch ; we were to discuss, whether his Majesty would renounce the title of King of France, a harmless feather, at most, in the crown of England ; we were to discuss, whether we would restore those ships taken at Toulon, the acquisition of valour, and which we were entitled upon every ground to hold ; we were to discuss, whether we would renounce the mortgage which we might possess on the Netherlands, and which engaged much of the honourable baronet's attention : but it does so happen, that what the honourable baronet considered as so important, was of no importance at all. For a mortgage on the Netherlands, we have none, and consequently we have none to renounce ; therefore, upon that condition, which they had no right to ask, and we had no means of granting, we told them the true state of the case, and that it was not worth talking about.

The next point which occurred, is of a nature which is difficult to dwell upon without indignation ; we were waiting the

fulfilment of a promise which had been made repeatedly, of delivering to our ambassador a *contre-projet*, when they who had desired us to come for the purpose of concluding a definitive treaty, propose that we should subscribe as a *sine quâ non* preliminary, that we were ready, in the first instance, to consent to give up all that we had taken, and then to hear what they had farther to ask. Is it possible to suppose that such a thing could be listened to by any country that was not prepared to prostrate itself at the feet of France, and in that abject posture to adore its conqueror, to solicit new insults, to submit to demands still more degrading and ignominious, and to cancel at once the honour of the British name? His Majesty had no hesitation in refusing to comply with such insolent and unwarrantable demands: Here again the house will see, that the spirit of the violent part of the French government which had the insolence to advance this proposition, had not acquired power and strength in that state of the negociation to adhere to it; his Majesty's explanations and remonstrances for a time prevailed, and an interval ensued, in which we had a hope, that we were advancing to a pacification. His Majesty's refusal of this demand was received by the French plenipotentiaries with assurances of a pacific disposition, was transmitted to their government, and was seconded by a continued and repeated repetition of promises, that a *contre-projet* should be presented, pretending that they were under the necessity of sending to their allies an account of what passed; and that they were endeavouring to prevail on them to accede to proposals for putting an end to the calamities of war—to terminate the calamities of that war into which those allies were forced, in which they were retained by France alone, and in which they purchased nothing but sacrifices to France, and misery to themselves. We were told, indeed, in a conference that followed, that they had obtained an answer, but that not being sufficiently satisfactory, it was sent back to be considered. This continued, during the whole period, until that dreadful catastrophe of the 4th of September; even after that event, the same pretence was held

out; they peremptorily promised the *contre-projet* in four days; the same pacific professions were renewed, and our minister was assured, that the change of circumstances in France should not be a bar to the pacification. Such was the uniform language of the plenipotentiaries in the name of the government—how it is proved by their actions I have already stated to the house. After this series of professions, what was the first step taken to go on with the negociation in this spirit of conciliation? Sir, the first step was to renew, as his Majesty's declaration has well stated, in a shape still more offensive, the former inadmissible and rejected demand; the rejection of which had been acquiesced in by themselves two months before, and during all which time, we had been impatiently waiting for the performance of their promises. That demand was the same that I have already stated in substance, that Lord Malmesbury should explain to them, not only his powers, but also his instructions; and they asked not for the formal extent of his power, which would give solidity to what he might conclude in the king's name, but they asked an irrevocable pledge, that he would consent to give up all that we had taken from them and from their allies, without knowing how much more they had afterwards to ask. It is true they endeavoured to convince Lord Malmesbury, that although an avowal of his instructions was demanded, it would never be required that he should act upon it, for there was a great difference between knowing the extent of the powers of a minister, and insisting upon their exercise. And here I would ask the honourable baronet, whether he thinks, if, in the first instance, we had given up all to the French plenipotentiaries, they would have given it all back again to us? Suppose I was ambassador from the French Directory, and the honourable baronet was ambassador from Great Britain, and I were to say to him, "Will you give up all you have gained? it would only be a handsome thing in you, as an Englishman, and no ungenerous use shall be made of it;" would the honourable baronet expect me, as a French ambassador, to say, "I am instructed, from the good nature of the

Directory, to say, you have acted handsomely, and I now return you what you have so generously given?" Should we not be called children and drivellers, if we could act in this manner? and indeed the French government could be nothing but children and drivellers, if they could suppose that we should have acceded to such a proposal.—But they are bound, it seems, by sacred treaties; they are bound by immutable laws; they are sworn when they make peace, to return every thing to their allies; and who shall require of France for the safety of Europe, to depart from its own pretensions to honour and independence?

If any person can really suppose that this country could have agreed to such a proposition, or that such a negociation was likely to lead to a good end, all I can say is, that with such a man I will not argue. I leave others to imagine what was likely to have been the end of a negociation, in which it was to have been settled as a preliminary, that you were to give up all that you have gained; and when, on the side of your enemy, not a word was said of what he had to propose afterwards. They demand of your ambassador to shew to them not only his powers, but also his instructions, before they explain a word of theirs; and they tell you too, that you are never to expect to hear what their powers are, until you shall be ready to concede every thing which the Directory may think fit to require. This is certainly the substance of what they propose; and they tell you also, that they are to carry on the negociation from the instructions which their plenipotentiaries are to receive from time to time from them. You are to have no power to instruct your ambassador; you are to shew to the enemy at once all you have in view, and they will only tell you from time to time, as to them shall seem meet, what demands they shall make.

It was thus it was attempted, on the part of the French, to commence the negociation. In July, this demand was made to Lord Malmesbury. He stated, that his powers were ample. In answer to this, they went no farther than to say, that if he had no such power as what they required, he should send to England to obtain it. To which he replied, that he had not, nor should

he have it if he sent. In this they acquiesce, and attempt to amuse us for two months. At the end of that time, the plenipotentiaries say to Lord Malmesbury, not what they said before, send to England for power to accede to proposals which you have already rejected; but go to England yourself for such powers, in order to obtain peace.

Such was the winding up of the negociation; such was the way in which the prospect of peace has been disappointed by the conduct of France; and I must look upon the dismissal of Lord Malmesbury as the last stage of the negociation, because the undisguised insult by which it was pretended to be kept up for ten days after Lord Malmesbury was sent away, was really below comment. You (France) send him to ask for those powers which you were told he had not, and in the refusal of which, you acquiesced: you have asked, as a preliminary, that which is monstrous and exorbitant; that preliminary you were told would not be complied with, and yet the performance of that preliminary you made the *sine quâ non* condition of his return! Such was the last step by which the French government has shewn that it had feeling enough left to think it necessary to search for some pretext to colour its proceedings; but they are such proceedings that no pretext or artifice can cover them, as will appear more particularly from the papers officially communicated to the house.

But here the subject does not rest: if we look to the whole complexion of this transaction, the duplicity, the arrogance, and violence which has appeared in the course of the negociation, if we take from thence our opinion of its general result, we shall be justified in our conclusion, not that the people of France, not that the whole government of France, but that that part of the government which had too much influence, and has now the whole ascendancy, never was sincere; was determined to accept of no terms but such as would make it neither durable nor safe, such as could only be accepted by this country by a surrender of all its interests, and by a sacrifice of every pretension to the character of a great, a powerful, or an independent nation.

This, Sir, is inference no longer, you have their own open avowal; you have it stated in the subsequent declaration of France itself, that it is not against your commerce, that it is not against your wealth, it is not against your possessions in the east, or colonies in the west, it is not against even the source of your maritime greatness, it is not against any of the appendages of your empire, but against the very essence of your liberty, against the foundation of your independence, against the citadel of your happiness, against your constitution itself, that their hostilities are directed. They have themselves announced and proclaimed the proposition, that what they mean to bring with their invading army is the genius of *their* liberty: I desire no other word to express the subversion of the British constitution,—and the substitution of the most malignant and fatal contrast,—and the annihilation of British liberty, and the obliteration of every thing that has rendered you a great, a flourishing, and a happy people.

This is what is at issue; for this are we to declare ourselves in a manner that deprecates the rage which our enemy will not dissemble, and which will be little moved by our entreaty. Under such circumstances are we ashamed or afraid to declare, in a firm and manly tone, our resolution to defend ourselves, or to speak the language of truth with the energy that belongs to Englishmen united in such a cause? Sir, I do not scruple for one to say, if I knew nothing by which I could state to myself a probability of the contest terminating in our favour, I would maintain, that the contest with its worst chances is preferable to an acquiescence in such demands.

If I could look at this as a dry question of prudence, if I could calculate it upon the mere grounds of interest, I would say, if we love that degree of national power which is necessary for the independence of the country, and its safety; if we regard domestic tranquillity, if we look at individual enjoyment, from the highest to the meanest among us, there is not a man, whose stake is so great in the country, that he ought to hesitate a moment in sacrificing any portion of it to oppose the violence of the

enemy; nor is there, I trust, a man in this happy and free nation, whose stake is so small, that would not be ready to sacrifice his life in the same cause. If we look at it with a view to safety, this would be our conduct; but if we look at it upon the principle of true honour, of the character which we have to support, of the example which we have to set to the other nations of Europe, if we view rightly the lot in which Providence has placed us, and the contrast between ourselves and all the other countries in Europe, gratitude to that Providence should inspire us to make every effort in such a cause. There may be danger, but on the one side there is danger accompanied with honour; on the other side, there is danger with indelible shame and disgrace; upon such an alternative, Englishmen will not hesitate. I wish to disguise no part of my sentiments upon the grounds on which I put the issue of the contest. I ask, whether up to the principles I have stated, we are prepared to act? Having done so, my opinion is not altered, my hopes however are animated from the reflection that the means of our safety are in our own hands; for there never was a period when we had more to encourage us; in spite of heavy burdens, the radical strength of the nation never shewed itself more conspicuous; its revenue never exhibited greater proofs of the wealth of the country; the same objects, which constitute the blessings we have to fight for, furnish us with the means of continuing them. But it is not upon that point I rest it; there is one great resource, which I trust will never abandon us, and which has shone forth in the English character, by which we have preserved our existence and fame, as a nation, which I trust we shall be determined never to abandon under any extremity, but shall join hand and heart in the solemn pledge that is proposed to us, and declare to his Majesty, that we know great exertions are wanting, that we are prepared to make them, and at all events determined to stand or fall by the laws, liberties, and religion of our country.

The amendment was afterwards withdrawn, and the original address passed *nemine contradicente*.

November 24, 1797.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply,

MR. PITT rose and addressed the committee to the following purport:—

In pursuance of the intimation which I gave upon a former day, I now rise to state to the committee the general outline of the measures which are proposed as the foundations for raising the supplies, and for meeting the exigencies of the ensuing year. As the principle of that part of the intended plan to which I am most desirous to direct the attention of the committee is new in the financial operations of this country, at least for more than a century; as it is a principle so important in its nature, and so extensive in its consequences, it is not my intention to call for any decision upon its merit in the present stage of the business. All that I now mean to state to the committee, I wish to be considered merely as a notice, and a general explanation of a plan that is afterwards to be brought forward. Any minute consideration and particular dispositions I shall omit till the subject is submitted to a detailed discussion, and content myself with a general view of the object proposed, and a general outline of the mode by which it is to be carried into execution. After the facts which are already in your possession, after the unanimous resolution which the two houses of parliament have passed upon the subject, it would be unnecessary for me to dwell upon the causes which demand your exertions, and the nature of the objects, which the supplies you are called upon to provide are intended to secure. The question which you have to consider is of no less importance than by what means you are to provide for the expenses which will be necessary to enable you successfully to resist the avowed intentions of an arrogant foe, to destroy your liberties and constitution, to cut off the sources of your wealth, your prosperity, your independence, and your glory. In pledging ourselves to withstand these haughty pretensions, and to defend the blessings we enjoy, we have not acted lightly. In expressing our determination to support the honour and the interest of the country at eve-

ry hazard, we spoke equally the dictates of sober reflection, and the language of indignant feeling; our judgment was in concord with our ardour; we declared ourselves ready to meet the difficulty in its fullest extent, and prepared to support our resolution at every extremity. I wish to be understood, therefore, that it is upon these principles, that the plan which I am now about to explain is founded. I know that it is upon these principles, that parliament and the nation have pledged themselves to act; by these principles, and these only, the measures which are to be submitted to your consideration have been framed, and it is upon these principles that their propriety ought to be judged.

Before I proceed to enter more largely into the principles of the plan which it is my intention to propose, I shall briefly take a view of the amount of the expenses for which it will be necessary to provide. These I shall state under the usual heads, avoiding in the present stage of the business, all minute details, and considering only the amount of the supplies which will be required.

I shall begin, then, with the sums that will be necessary for the service of the navy. The committee will recollect that there has already been voted for this branch, the sum of 12,539,000*l*. It will likewise be recollected, that the estimates of the present year have been made out in a new form, intended, with greater correctness than formerly, to present a full view of all the expense that would be necessary. Instead of the former allowance of 4*l*. per month, which was found to be inadequate, the full expense has been taken into view. Even in their present shape the estimates are not to be considered as so accurate as to exclude the possibility of any excess. All that can be said is, that they are now more likely than at any former period to include the whole of the expense which this branch of the service may demand. The amount voted, then, for this article is 12,539,000*l*. It is unnecessary here to specify the different heads of this branch; all that is requisite is, to point out the whole of the expense which we are called upon to devise measures to supply. Besides

this sum, there will be a sum of navy debt, owing to the excess of last year above the estimate, amounting to three millions. This, however, will form no part of the expense for which it will now be requisite to make a cash provision. It will only be requisite to provide a sum equal to the interest; and in the present state of the funds, that provision cannot be calculated at less than 250,000*l*. By a regulation adopted last year to prevent the depreciation of navy and exchequer bills, by providing that the period of payment should never be very distant from their date, there will be on their monthly issue of 500,000*l*. a floating debt of 1,500,000*l*. to be funded, arising out of the excess of the estimates for the year 1797. There will likewise be a similar sum of 1,500,000*l*. falling due in the year 1799; but for these no cash provision will be necessary, nor are they included in the supplies to be raised. The sum of 12,539,000*l* is all that enters into the account of the supplies under this branch for the ensuing year.

The expense for the army, excepting only barracks and extraordinaries, has likewise been voted. What the amount of the extraordinaries will be, it is impossible to ascertain; but so far as can be collected from the bills already drawn, this article may be taken at four millions besides the vote of credit, making an excess of about 1,300,000*l*. at the end of the year.

In judging of the probable amount of the demands of this branch of service for the year 1798, it will be seen that there is no prospect of increase at home; that the situation of the war abroad promises to admit of a diminution; and that from the general state of affairs, many of the causes, which contributed to swell the extraordinaries of the army, cease to operate. The amount of the extraordinaries, then, may be taken at 2,500,000*l*. The charge on the head of barracks may be estimated at 400,000*l*. The expense of guards and garrisons, and the general articles included under this head, has already been voted, amounting to 10,112,000*l*. The ordnance may be taken at 1,300,000*l*.; and the various articles of miscellaneous service may be rated at 673,000*l*. There remain only two articles to be noticed, the

sum of 200,000*l.* appropriated for the reduction of the national debt, and about 680,000*l.* arising from deficiencies of grants. From the whole, then, the committee will see, that the sum now to be provided for amounts to about twenty-five millions and a half. Supposing the statements under the head of the army and navy to be correct, the expense on these branches will be reduced to the extent of two millions and a half; and, including the reduction on the head of extraordinaries, the saving upon the whole will amount to the sum of 6,700,000*l.*

Notwithstanding this diminution, however, there still remains the sum of twenty-five millions and a half to be provided for, as the supplies of the ensuing year. Before I proceed to explain the general plan proposed for covering this expense, I shall state the usual articles which compose part of the annual ways and means.

These are the growing produce of the consolidated fund, and the land and malt. The former I shall take, along with the profit on the lottery, at so very small a sum as 700,000*l.* making with the land and malt the sum of three millions and a half. There still remains, however, the sum of twenty-two millions to be supplied by some other means. The mode by which this sum is to be raised, forms the great object of consideration. The reduction upon the head of naval and military establishment does, indeed, amount to a very considerable saving. The committee will see with satisfaction that their expenses admit of a diminution below what was necessary in some former periods of the war. Pleasing as this circumstance certainly is, I will not disguise, however, that after the sums which have already been added to the national debt, after the burdens which have already been imposed, to raise so large a sum as twenty-two millions, is no light matter. But the difficulty is to be examined with a firm determination to exert every effort which the magnitude of the occasion demands, with a firm determination to produce the means by which the struggle is to be supported with vigour and with effect, so long as these continue to be the only course by which we can maintain our national honour, and secure our na-

tional safety. After this decided resolution, to render these supplies effective, the next point to be considered is the mode by which the expense is to be defrayed, without danger to the sources of our prosperity, and without inconvenience to those who may be called upon to contribute.

Before I enter into the statement of that plan by which it is proposed to meet a considerable part of this expense in a manner rather new in our more recent financial operations, I shall mention one of the intended supplies which, under the restriction with which it will be guarded, I am disposed to think will be viewed as altogether unexceptionable. After what I have heard from some gentlemen on former discussions, I cannot expect that the measure to which I allude will encounter no opposition; but I am pretty confident that though not universal, the approbation which it will receive will be very general. This measure, however, is considerably different from that which some gentlemen conceive. I propose that towards the supplies the bank shall make an advance to government. The sum which it is in contemplation thus to raise is neither very large in itself, nor will it be made in such a shape as to deprive the bank of the certainty of repayment within a short period, if it shall be considered expedient to take off the restriction on payment in cash. That under all the circumstances of our present situation that restriction is necessary, I cannot entertain a doubt. I confess, that, while the war continues in its present shape, it is my decided opinion that it would be unwise to discontinue that restriction. If, however, any unforeseen events of the war, or if the return of peace should supersede that necessity, the advances, which it is proposed should be made by the bank, are to be upon such conditions as shall render them available for the payment of their debt. If such a measure should meet with the approbation of parliament, the bank will consent to make the advance. If it is clear, then, that in the present situation of affairs the restriction is prudent, if, under the conditions intended to be stipulated with regard to the manner of repayment, this advance will be attended with advantage to the public service without any detriment to the

bank, I am at a loss to discover why we should decline an accommodation which, in the present circumstances of the country, would prove so material a relief. The sum of three millions, then, the bank will agree to advance on exchequer bills, to be repaid at a short period, capable of being prolonged if nothing occur to render that extension inexpedient, but still claimable by the bank if any change in their affairs shall render it necessary.

There now remains to be supplied the sum of nineteen millions. According to the received system of our financial operations, the natural and ordinary mode of providing this sum would be by a loan. I know that, notwithstanding the magnitude of the debt already accumulated, resources are still left for supplying the public service by this means. I admit the funding system, which has been so long the established mode of supplying the public wants, though I cannot but regret the extent to which it has been carried, is not yet exhausted. If we look, however, at the general diffusion of wealth, and the great accumulation of capital; above all, if we consider the hopes which the enemy have conceived of wearying us out by the embarrassments of the funding system, we shall find that the true mode of preparing ourselves to maintain the contest with effect and success, is to reduce the advantages which the funding system is calculated to afford within due limits, and to prevent the depreciation of our national securities. We ought to consider how far the efforts we shall exert to preserve the blessings we enjoy, will enable us to transmit the inheritance to posterity unincumbered with those burdens which would cripple their vigour, which would prevent them from asserting that rank in the scale of nations which their ancestors so long and so gloriously maintained. It is in this point of view that the subject ought to be considered. Whatever objections might have been fairly urged against the funding system in its origin, no man can suppose that, after the form and shape which it has given to our financial affairs, after the heavy burdens which it has left behind it, we can now recur to the notion of raising in one year the whole of the supplies which a scale

of expense, so extensive as ours, must require. If such a plan is evidently impracticable, some medium, however, may be found to draw as much advantage from the funding system, as it is fit, consistently with a due regard for posterity, to employ, and at the same time to obviate the evils with which its excess would be attended. We still may devise some expedient by which we may contribute to the defence of our own cause, and to the supply of our own exigencies, by which we may reduce within equitable limits the accommodation of the funding system, and lay the foundation of that quick redemption which will prevent the dangerous consequences of an overgrown accumulation of our public debt.

Such are the advantages which the plan I am about to propose endeavours to combine. To guard against the accumulation of the funded debt, and to contribute that share to the support of the struggle in which we are engaged, which our ability will permit without inconvenience to those who are called upon to contribute, appears essentially necessary. The great object of such a practical scheme must be to allot fairly and equally to every class that portion which each ought to bear. As I have already stated then, it is my intention to propose, not for your immediate decision, but for your mature deliberation, the plan of raising, by a general tax within the year, the sum of seven millions. I am aware that this sum does far exceed any thing which has been raised at any former period at one time, but I trust I have stated sufficient reasons to shew that it is a wise and necessary measure. I am sure that whatever temporary sacrifices it may be necessary to make, the committee will feel that they can best provide for the ultimate success of the struggle, by shewing that they are determined to be guided by no personal considerations, that, while they defend the present blessings they enjoy, they are not regardless of posterity. If the sacrifices required be considered in this view; if they be taken in reference to the objects for which we contend, and the evils which we are labouring to avert, great as they may be compared with former exertions, they must appear very light in the balance.

It will be observed that there will be twelve millions out of the eighteen still to be provided for in the way of loan. At present I state this circumstance merely in the cursory review I have taken of the whole supplies. In what manner it will be done must depend upon the views which the progress of affairs may afterwards suggest. Certain parts of this sum would probably be raised on different terms. Whatever part of it might be covered by the produce of the sinking fund may be borrowed as permanent debt, providing for its redemption on the same terms with the other permanent debt; other parts again may be borrowed upon a much earlier scheme of redemption. But to proceed to the mode by which it is proposed to raise this sum of seven millions.

It has been understood for a considerable time that a great increase of the assessed taxes was in agitation. I shall state the reasons why this branch of the revenue has been chosen as best calculated to combine the advantages, which I have already explained as desirable in the intended plan. The objects to be attained in the mode of executing this scheme are threefold. One great point is, that the plan should be diffused as extensively as possible; that it should be regulated as fairly and equally as possible, without the necessity of such an investigation of property as the customs, the manners, and the pursuits of the people would render odious and vexatious. That it should exclude those who are least able to contribute or furnish means of relief; that it should distinguish the gradation of classes; that it should admit of those abatements which, in particular instances, it might be prudent to make in the portion of those who might be liable under its general principles. I am aware that no measure can be devised adequately to provide for all these objects in all their details and in every particular instance. No scheme can be practically carried into execution, in any financial arrangement, much more in such a one as the present, with such perfect dispositions as to guard against every possible inconvenience, and to render every individual application unexceptionable. These general principles, however must be kept in view in every practical

plan, and the great question in discussion will be, whether any means of apportioning the extent of the contribution can be found, better calculated to preserve them entire than the provisions which I propose contain. It will at once occur that the taxes, known by the name of assessed, include so many objects different in their nature, so many objects in the present state of society of real necessity, so many of optional use and of luxury, so diversified by modes and by the state of families, that in general nothing can afford a better test of expenditure than the way in which these taxes are combined. One great objection, that the poor who contribute to the assessed taxes yet may be entitled to be exempted from such a contribution as the present, will thus be obviated in a striking manner. Those who contribute to the assessed taxes compose a number of about 7 or 800,000 housekeepers and masters of families, including a population of nearly four millions, on whom the sum will be raised. Who then are those who will be entitled to exemption? Those who already are not included at all, on account of their poverty, or those who, for the same reason, are discharged from payment. Whether this description includes the artificers and labourers who have a fair claim to exemption, there is at least reason to believe, from the best information that can be collected, that 500,000 housekeepers and masters of families, covering a population of between two and three millions, are so comprehended. Such is the extent of the total exemption.

The next object then is, to consider the effect of the contribution upon those classes on which it would be raised. The assessed taxes so far as can be ascertained, amount to a sum of about 2,700,000*l*. This sum as collected is levied on about 7 or 800,000 housekeepers, of whom it is ascertained that 400,000 do not contribute more than 150,000*l*. This, indeed, is a little increased by the late additions, but in a very small proportion, as these additions chiefly affect those who belong to the superior classes. The proposed additional assessment, then, upon the whole contributors, would amount, on the whole sum of the assessed taxes, to something less than a treble contribution. Why it will be something less than treble, which

would be about eight millions, will be explained in the sequel. When we see that 400,000 householders contribute only 150,000*l.* we shall see how small a part of the additional share will fall upon those who are most entitled to mitigation. In this extensive apportionment too, we shall discover the modifications which it may be necessary to make, and the means to adapt it to the ability of the contributors. The assessed taxes obviously divide themselves into two classes. Those which in a great measure applied to inhabited houses, consisted of three duties; that which was known by the name of the old duty, the window duty, and the commutation duty, first imposed last war, and regulated in 1788; and of the different per cents. since imposed, which may amount to about 1,400,000*l.* out of two millions and a half. In this both the high and the low classes were included; but among the latter, 400,000 contributed only 150,000*l.* The other consists of optional consumptions and luxury—the duty on servants, carriages, horses for pleasure, and that class of horses employed in agriculture, the proprietors of whom, in the present state of the country, one of the most opulent classes which it contains, could not be injured by such an addition to the moderate rate which is now paid. It will readily occur that, where there are houses which do not contribute for the optional, or class of luxury, there the inhabitant must be best entitled to favour and mitigation. On these, then, the burden will fall much more lightly than on those, such as ourselves, and those who contribute to both divisions of the assessed taxes. There is another distinction likewise which will increase the facility of applying the relief, which it may be found proper to bestow. The house tax in the metropolis and other great towns, is more felt by the inferior classes than it is felt by the same class in the country. Persons in the same circumstances of life, who in the country pay only perhaps 2*l.*, in towns may pay three or four times that amount. It is the advantage of this plan then, that it will be in the power of the committee to make the contribution bear upon those who are best able to pay, and diminish the burden of those who are best entitled to relief. It forms another charac-

teristic advantage of the plan, that the relief which it may be expedient to give to the poor, will not materially affect the productiveness of the tax. There is reason to believe, from the best estimate that can be formed, that not more than 3 or 400,000*l.* is raised in all the metropolis. This includes, indeed, all who are entitled to relief, but it likewise includes all those who are best able to pay. If great cities and populous towns contain a great number who, from their poverty, have a claim to exemption, they contain likewise a great proportion of the opulent class, who will be able to contribute in such a manner as to supply what it would be unfair to exact from the inferior class. Thus the two classes together will supply what is required without oppression to the poor, or defalcation of the tax. In this manner, following the gradations of ability, as they are clearly pointed out by the profits of voluntary or luxurious contribution, and the claims to relief, as they are ascertained by the nature of the taxes which individuals already pay, the full amount will be fairly collected, and the burden justly distributed. In this way the first class of contribution will, on the whole, double the amount of what is already paid, though in some cases it may be more than double, in others considerably less. In this way 2,800,000*l.* may be obtained. Upon that class which comprehends the taxes on servants, pleasure horses, carriages, &c. it is proposed to treble the assessment. In the higher classes, where the quantity of assessed taxes may be considered as a fair criterion of opulence, the rate of contribution may in some cases be an addition of three and a half, and even, in the highest class of all, a quadruple of the present tax.

On the second description, there may be obtained about 3,900,000*l.* at the treble rate. Allowing 500,000*l.* for the highest class, the produce with the 2,800,000*l.* for the first class, makes more than 7,000,000*l.* If it were trebled on the whole, the produce would be more than 8,000,000*l.*; but it will now be sufficiently understood, that, from the modifications which it will be expedient to introduce, in many cases, instead of double there will not be one rate, in some not one half rate, and others still

less, to be exacted. Thus, from the treble allotment, there will be nearly one million to be divided in modification to alleviate the burdens of those whom it may be wise to exempt. In this manner each class will mutually contribute to the relief of those who are unable to sustain an additional burden, and the 400,000 who now pay so small a proportion will continue to be protected from any severe exaction by the extent which the tax will receive from the more opulent class of contributors.

Thus the advantage of such an arrangement will allow sufficient latitude of relief where relief should be given without diminishing the productiveness of the tax. It will allow any exemption to those who have *no means*, not to those who are *unwilling* to contribute; of the former there may be many in number, but little in amount; of the latter, whatever the amount may be, I am sure the numbers will be few. I am sure that there cannot be a large proportion of men in any part of this country who will be unwilling to concur in those measures which are felt so necessary for the public safety, or who can refuse to contribute a part of their property for the preservation of all they possess. In such a cause no man can find the extent of his contribution limited, but by the extent of his ability. In every class where the means exceed the actual necessity; in every case where the power of contribution exceeds the absolute demand, no man can surely be so unmindful of the duties he owes to his country, no man can be so blind to the interests he has to preserve, as not to feel that he makes the most frugal and generous option in contributing to defend the society, of which he forms a component part, and to maintain that station which he occupies. I am aware that I anticipate the wishes of every man who hears me, in thus proposing that the extent of the relief, which the poor will receive, will be defrayed by the rate of contribution varying with the property and the stake which men hold in the country, by attaching upon the same class with ourselves the additional burdens which the poverty of the lower classes will improve. In thus affording a proof of the sincerity of the pledge we have given by our readiness to make the sacrifices which it requires, I feel that I am equally in unison with the

general sentiment of the committee, as with the great principles of policy and of justice. Speaking for ourselves, we thus disclaim every little jealousy of the extent of the burden we are called upon to bear. We prove to the world that we are not limited by this or that contribution; we demonstrate that we calculate only the magnitude of the occasion, and consider only whether the effort be equal to the importance of the demand. I trust that the exertion will not be deficient, that the contribution will not be inadequate; but if it were found to be below the unexampled greatness of the cause, I am sure that the utmost alacrity would be shewn to submit to still greater sacrifices, and to display more vigorous efforts. We have the satisfaction of knowing that, however heavy these burdens might be, if permanent, yet as temporary sacrifices they are light in the scale when weighed against this mighty crisis and extremity of defence, when compared with the horrors we have to shun, and the value of the blessings we have to preserve. If I am not deceived in the inquiries I have made, the greatest contribution will not exceed a tenth of the income of the highest class of those by whom it is paid. No man surely will think such a sacrifice too great for such a cause; he cannot think advantages too dearly purchased, if the effect of our preparation be to discourage the extravagant pretensions of the enemy, to dissipate the vain hopes they have built on our supposed financial embarrassments, to animate confidence at home, to confirm the solidity of our power, and to maintain the sources of our prosperity.

Having thus explained the general nature of the plan proposed, I must not omit to suggest the precautions which will be necessary to prevent the contribution from being eluded on the one hand by a subsequent diminution of establishment, and on the other, to make provision that a real change of circumstances may not expose individuals to an oppressive exaction. It is evident, however, that in order to make the tax productive, it must proceed on a past, not on a future assessment. For, Sir, every gentleman must feel, that if for the period this contribution is to be levied upon the people, the share each individual is to con-

tribute, were to be regulated by future assessments, a great part of the benefit there is now reason to expect we shall derive from it, would be frittered away by concealment and evasion. It is therefore my purpose to propose, that not future but past assessments shall be made the basis of the new contribution; because, *prima facie*, the most impartial evidence that can be obtained of the ability of each individual to contribute to the exigencies of the state, is the amount of his expenditure of income before he has any temptation to lower it, in order to elude taxation. On the other hand, Sir, as cases may exist of some, who by accidental causes are rendered unable to support their present establishment; of others, who, having improvidently engaged in them, repent of their imprudence and desire to return to a situation better adapted to their real circumstances; and of others, who, though able to pay their present assessments, can shew themselves by the proportion they bear to their income, to be unable to bear the additional weight of the new contributions, it is my intention, when the whole shall come in detail before the house, to propose regulations for the relief of such persons, to be digested and modified in the best manner which so complicated a subject will admit. But while provisos of this kind are to be made in favour of those upon whom the assessment would be too severely felt, the house will foresee that it will be impossible, with any regard to the great and important object in view, to suffer the tax to be evaded by those who, not deficient in ability, but wanting in inclination to contribute to the necessities of their country, would abandon the establishments to which they have been accustomed, and diminish their expenditure, in order to avoid the tax. But if it be found that, in point of fact, they shall have resigned their establishments from inability to maintain them; and, if they follow up that resignation with a declaration to be prescribed for the purpose, that the increased assessments would amount to more than a certain proportion, to be regulated on a future day, of their whole income, then they shall be entitled to relief. Sir, I am aware, that, though the house and the nation will, with few exceptions, concur with me

in this, there will not be wanting those who will cavil at this mitigating provision, and allege that it will amount in its effects to a compulsory disclosure of property; but the house will immediately see that it falls short of that, and will view it in its true aspect, that is to say, as a provision intended to qualify, to mitigate, or to prevent any severity or injury that may arise to individuals from the difficulty, or rather the utter impracticability of drawing a precise line of demarkation between those who, on account of the property they possess are bound, and those who, from inferior circumstances, are unable, to contribute to a supply for the exigencies of the state: no man can say that such a provision, coming with the effects of relief, is a hardship, and I am sure no man can say that the tax would be efficient without it. These, Sir, are the outlines of the plan which I mean to offer to the consideration of the house in more minute detail upon a future day. If, when the whole has been examined, it shall meet the concurrence of, and be adopted by the house, it will be found disengaged from many difficulties, embarrassments, and expenses, that lie in the way of other modes of taxation; for, Sir, the execution of it will entirely depend upon laws now existing, laws long in force, laws familiar to those who will be the objects of its provisions. To enforce it, no new power will be delegated, no new office created, no new expenses incurred.

Sir, I am aware that in contemplating a system of finance which professes to make property the basis of its assessments, and to be as diffusively, as generally, and as equally levied as circumstances will admit, an idea will naturally suggest itself to every one, as it has to myself—I mean that assessed taxes, however differently apportioned to the circumstances of different persons, and however certainly they may attach on persons of opposite descriptions, are often eluded by a particular description of men of large property; you will see I mean those men who possess large capitals, and who, by denying themselves many of the enjoyments of life, hoard up money, and exclude themselves from assessment. How much this applies to the subject in con-

sideration I will not now discuss, since it certainly applies no more to this than to any former mode of taxation; for I know no act to make property the subject of taxation, while it is not rendered conducive to the pleasure or convenience, or rendered visible by the optional expenditure of the person who possesses it. If this objection has never stood in the way of taxation before, I am at a loss to suppose how it can be made an objection to this, and shall be extremely obliged to any gentleman who will point out a mode by which property so held in hand can be subjected to taxation or assessment. The proportion this class of individuals bears to the mass of the taxable part of the nation, is not sufficiently great to add any weight to the objection if it were made; and I submit it to the feelings and wisdom of the committee, whether, in a case of urgency and importance like the present, nine-tenths of the community shall refuse to contribute to the support, the preservation, the existence of the state, because no means can be found to compel the remaining tenth to contribute also. Undoubtedly if it be now necessary to make great contributions instead of incurring a large mass of new debt, and if that be the best mode of carrying on the war, it would be greatly advantageous to be able to get at some mode of assessing all property in all individuals; and so far it is to be lamented that the description of people of which I speak cannot be made subject to an assessment. But if, on the other hand, we can flatter ourselves, as I own I do, with the hopes of being relieved sometime from that necessity, then, even though the hoards of the penurious elude our search, it by no means follows that the nation will receive no profit from them; for on a general plan, though utterly inactive in the expenditure of the possessors, they become active in some other shape, or in other hands, and always find their level in the course of successive ages: so that though the scrutiny to pry into wealth may for a time be baffled, the effects of that scrutiny never fail to be produced by time. If, however, I saw the means, or could suppose that means might be devised, by which such capitals could be made productive and useful to the state in way of revenue, I do assure the com-

mittee I should consider it an object too important at this time to be neglected; though I still consider them as making a part of the strength of the country upon the average principles of general resources. Yet, Sir, we might flatter ourselves that, independent of that compulsory power which the condition of such property denies us, a due proportion of it would, at least in some cases, be forthcoming at the solicitation of self-interest and self-defence; for if this is a time, as I contend it is, when the people of this country are called upon not to contemplate their wealth only for its enjoyment, not to indulge in prejudices, or opinions, or in doubtful speculations, but to take measures for the preservation of their existence now, and their security in future, and that for this purpose we are calling for money, not to be raised by loan with interest, to remain a heavy burden on those who are to follow us, but by demand on capital, then ought the hoards of the penurious to be opened; then should those who, devoted to accumulation by ignorance of enjoyment, and early habits of frugality, have arisen from the lower rank and meanest employments, by rigid frugality and indefatigable industry, protected, fostered, and encouraged by that happy system of government and those equal laws which enabled them and permits any man to emerge from the bottom to the top of society, and who, in contemplating their possessions, can scarcely have a hope but that of transmitting to their posterity those blessings and comforts they deny themselves—then ought they, I say, for the recollection of the benefits they have received, and for the sake of those to which they look forward, to consider themselves above all men bound to come forward, in defence of that system which afforded encouragement to their labours, nurture to their industry, vigour to their pursuits, and protection to their persons, their property and their acquisitions; then ought such men to reflect, if they have the means, that this is the occasion on which they should come forward; then ought they, who have an interest so great in the country, to see that though it is impracticable to compel them, it is at least necessary for them to contribute, and that the necessity of the times is the

most urgent, as well as the best of all compulsions ; and come forward, not only uncompelled, but unsolicited, to offer their contribution. That some will have this feeling, and act upon it, I will not doubt—that all will do so, I am not so sanguine as to expect ; but though they should neither come forward voluntarily, nor be subject to coercion, that can hardly be stated as an objection to the plan, unless something more unexceptionable can be presented in its place.

Then, Sir, there remains another, and a leading consideration. I have already stated the grounds on which I build my plan for raising seven millions of the nineteen that are necessary for the supply of the year. This leaves, as I have before mentioned, a sum of twelve millions to be raised by loan. And here a point, separate, indeed, in its nature, but not less important in its consequences, properly claims your attention. I have stated that the sum of seven millions, to be levied in a direct way by increased assessments, is intended to make the quantum of the loan more moderate. But I shall now state another principle which would lay the security, the credit, the efficient powers, and the resources of the country on a firm and immoveable foundation—a principle that will tend not to effect a diminution of our burdens for the present, but to prevent an accumulation of them for the future. The house will recollect that, by means of the sinking fund, we had advanced far in the reduction of the national debt previous to the loans necessarily made in the present war, and every year was attended with such accelerated salutary effects as outran the most sanguine calculation. But having done so, we have yet far to go as things are circumstanced, if the reduction of the debt be confined to the operations of that fund, and the expenses of the war continue to impede our plans of economy : we shall have far to go before the operation of that fund, even under the influence of peace, can be expected to counteract the effects of the war. Yet there are means by which, I am confident, it would be practicable in not many years to restore our resources, and put the country in a state equal to all exigencies. It is impossible,

Sir, but we must feel ourselves bound by duty, if we wanted the encouragement of success, to proceed in the business, and to complete the work which has already had so much success, and even to provide, if it shall be found expedient or necessary, for more rapidly accomplishing that desirable object. Not only, Sir, do I think that the principle is wise, and the attempt practicable, to provide large supplies out of the direct taxes of the year; but I conceive it to be equally wise, and not less practicable, to make provision for the amount of the debt incurred and funded in the same year; and if the necessity of carrying on the war shall entail upon us the necessity of contracting another debt, the principle I have in view is such, that, with the assistance of the sinking fund to co-operate, we shall not owe more than at the beginning. I cannot, indeed, take upon me to say, that the war will not stop the progress of the plan of liquidation; but if the means to which I look be adopted, it will leave us at least stationary—it will leave us where we were; and besides the salutary influence it will have upon our credit and resources at home, it will produce the happy effect of demonstrating to the enemy, that, whatever the nature of the contest may be, or whatever its duration, our strength is undiminished, our resources unexhausted, and our general situation unimpaired; that the hopes they entertain of destroying the country through the medium of its finance, are as vain as their designs are wicked; and that, whatever measures they may think proper to adopt against this country, they will find us not at all disabled for the contest. But, Sir, it is necessary for me to be more explicit; and I will endeavour to make the point appear as clear to the house as it now appears to me.

If I must borrow twelve millions, four of those may be borrowed without making any additional debt; for the sinking fund will pay so much. There then will remain eight millions, which would be an additional permanent capital if suffered to be funded: for these eight millions, therefore, I would make a

different provision, that is to say, I would propose that the increased assessed taxes, the plan of which I have already laid before the house, be continued till the principal and interest be completely discharged; so that, after seven millions have been raised for this year, the same taxes in one year more, with the additional aid of the sinking fund, will pay off all that principal and intermediate interest. My proposition, therefore, if carried into effect, would not only furnish a current supply, but quicken the redemption of the national debt, without bearing harder on the people than they can conveniently sustain. This would speak a language to all Europe; this would speak a language to the enemy, that, by cooling the ardour of their expectations, and shewing them the absurdity of their designs, will afford the best chance of shortening the duration of the war, and of lessening the duration and weight of our taxes. If you feel yourselves equal to this exertion, its effects will not be confined merely to the benefits I have stated in the way of general policy, and in a successful determination of the contest, but will go farther; it will go to the exoneration of the nation from increased burdens, and to the relief of those who are to follow us from the weight of the expenses of a war, waged in defence of a system which we have received from our progenitors in trust to be transmitted entire to our successors. Unless you feel you have a right to expect, that by less exertion you will be equally secure, and indulge the supposition that, by stopping short of this effort, you will produce a successful termination of the war, you must set aside all apprehensions of the present pressure, and, by vigorous exertion, endeavour to secure your future stability, the happy effects of which, I pledge myself, will soon be seen and acknowledged. I am aware that it will be said, (for it has often been said) and I agree to it, that it would be fortunate if the practice of funding had never been introduced; and that it is not terminated is much to be lamented; but if we are arrived at a moment which requires a change of system, it is some encouragement for us to look forward to benefits, which, on all

former occasions, have been unknown, because the means of obtaining them were neglected.

If, Sir, the whole sum be provided for in the manner I propose, instead of being funded, the advantages will be greater than those, who have not been at the trouble to calculate it, can suppose. In the mode I propose, the whole, with the interest on it, will amount to no more than sixteen millions; raise that sum, and you and your posterity are completely exonerated from it; but if, on the contrary, you will fund, it will entail an annual tribute of 150,000*l.* for forty years, which makes a difference of not less than forty millions to those who are to follow you. These are the principles, this is the language, this the conduct fit for men legislating for a country, that, from its situation, its constitution, and its natural strength, bears the fairest title of any in Europe to perpetuity. You should look to distant benefits, and not work in the narrow circumscribed sphere of short-sighted, selfish politicians. You should put to yourselves this question, the only one now to be considered—"Shall we sacrifice, or shall we save to our posterity, a sum of between forty and fifty millions sterling?" And above all, you should consider the important effect such firm and dignified conduct will have in the progress and termination of the present contest, which may, without exaggeration, be said to involve every thing dear to yourselves, and to include in it the fate of your posterity.

The house will now judge how far I have succeeded in finding a criterion by which to mark out the distinctions and the proportions in the taxes I have proposed. They will decide how far I have succeeded in accommodating the different rates of increase to the circumstances of the different classes of society: they will determine whether I have given a plan that affords sufficient modifications, and just mitigations of the severity of the imposts. If there be any thing defective, I wish to supply it; if there be any thing erroneous, I am desirous to rectify it; if I have exceeded, I am willing to retrench: it is a measure of unprecedented importance, and it must be my anxious desire

to be correct in it. I therefore court investigation—but I earnestly hope there will be no difference of opinion in the house, as to the principle upon which the measure is founded. As I have not been able to find, in any man of any party, a trace of doubt as to the sufficiency of our resources, I think I have a right to assume that there can be no difference as to our right to employ them; at least I can say that I have not heard a word of any avowed difference on that point in any corner of the country. Attested thus, I have produced a state of resources unimpaired even by this wasteful war: on any other account no difference can possibly arise upon this day. In the interval between this and the day on which I shall finally bring this subject before you, I will receive with attention any observations that gentlemen may please to suggest; and I hope all will agree with me, that the question for consideration is not, whether the burdens proposed are heavy or unprecedented, but whether there is any option left to us—whether they are not dictated by unavoidable necessity, and whether any, better adapted to the circumstances of the country, can be devised to supply their places?

Sir, having said so much, I will not follow it up with particulars, but move a resolution conformable to the general design I have laid before the committee; and I will postpone the particular parts of the plan to another day—the earliest that circumstances will allow.

He then moved the following resolution, which was agreed to:

“That it is the opinion of this committee, that there shall be paid a duty, not exceeding treble the amount of the duties imposed by several acts of parliament now in force, on houses and windows, and inhabited houses, by the 6th, 19th, 24th, and 37th Geo. III. and likewise the several additional duties of ten per cent. per annum, imposed thereon by several acts of parliament, with certain exceptions and abatements.”

Mr. Tierney rose next ; and, after going over the various calculations of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and inferring from thence the declining state of the national resources, he declared, that with the present administration he held it impossible that this country could have peace. The right honourable gentleman, he affirmed, wanted the requisites to bring about a peace ; he possessed not the confidence and respect either of France, or of any of the European powers.

MR. PITT replied :

I shall endeavour to follow the honourable gentleman who has just sat down, in some of the observations he has thought proper to make. Knowing, as I do, the ingenuity of that gentleman, and recollecting his declaration in this house some time since ; knowing that he stands pledged to give his Majesty's present ministers every opposition in his power—when I compare that declaration, and apply it to his speech to-night, a speech certainly not destitute of ingenuity or of preparation, I own I am a little at a loss to find in him that consistency for which he expects to obtain credit, as a man wishing for nothing so much as the welfare of his country. Whatever may be thought of the speech of the honourable gentleman, either by the public or by his own constituents, I shall observe upon parts of his speech as they appear to me. I will endeavour to follow him in his direct and his collateral topics ; in some which were certainly not direct, and in others that I cannot say were collateral, because they had no reference to the subjects now before the committee, either collaterally or otherwise. He begins by complaining of excess, and he comments on the navy estimates, in which his zeal has misled him. He talks of three millions, and a million and a half, as sums I took credit for ; whereas I stated the whole sum to which he referred in this part of his speech would be three millions, and that I should provide for half of them by bills, and that a million and a half of them should be outstanding. But he then goes on to state, that I made a mistake of three millions upon the statement of navy extraordinaries. Gentlemen assert things that have no foundation any where but in their own fancy, and they repeat them so often, and with so much confidence, that at last they become the dupes of their

own artifice, and believe these assertions themselves. Be it remembered, however, that in the course of every session since the war began, I have, on every occasion, stated that the nature of such extensive transactions, as those of the army and navy, was such as to render accuracy in the estimate unattainable. I do not pretend to it at any time, but I always do my utmost to approach it; and I do aver that there never was at any time of war more attention paid, than in the whole course of this, to prevent excesses beyond the estimate. True it is, you have had more excesses in this than in any other war, nor is it marvellous, for it is a war of a different kind, and of a more complicated nature than any other you were ever before engaged in. But the honourable gentleman, in his public zeal to detect the fallacy of my statements, assures the committee, that, in stating the sum of five millions upon the article of the navy, I have committed an error of three millions. This he states as being the excess upon one article, which amounts, I own, to only five millions; but the excess fairly applies to the whole sum of seventeen millions, of which these five were a part; and instead of taking the whole, and considering that excess as applying to the whole, he applies it to one part, merely because the whole of the sum was voted by separate votes on different heads, and compares that excess with one branch of the whole. I shall say no more than that I leave the committee to judge of the fairness of such a mode of reasoning.

The honourable gentleman says, I do not now speak with confidence on the produce of the taxes, and yet he allows the revenue to be flourishing, in which too, it seems, he rejoices. He says I have put into the mouth of the king what has not been uttered out of my own this night. Nothing has been said by me upon that subject to-night—I mean upon the flourishing state of our revenue. No, Sir, it is not out of my mouth that expression came to-night, and which the honourable gentleman censures me for omitting, but out of his own; and when the honourable gentleman thinks he sees a smile from this side of the house, he magnifies it into a horse-laugh in consequence of what

he advances. I am afraid he gives credit to some part of the house for more attention than they deserve. All these considerations induce me to suspect, that, if I had stated many things which he expected me to state concerning the prosperity of the country, he was prepared with a long speech to contradict me upon that head. He went into a detail of the revenue in 1796 and 1797, from which the committee is to derive nothing but a very desponding inference. For the future powers of this country are, according to his deductions, to be very feeble. He is not, however, bound to abide by these sentiments; and as he says he will take a view of the subject, and mature his judgment for the discussion of it in future, I hope a minute attention to it will alter his opinion. He has told us that the accounts are not yet before us. In this his vigilance has been eluded, for the documents necessary for the purpose are now upon your table, and by which, if he condescends to peruse them, he will find that the report of the committee of finance, and which holds out to us a prospect so flattering, is entirely justified. The honourable gentleman dwelt for some time on the produce of the wine duty, and that of the Scotch distillery, and infers that they will not answer the estimate; in which inference he is too rapid, for neither of which has hitherto found its level. These points I merely touch incidentally, not meaning to argue them now, that being foreign to the leading purpose of this night's discussion, and of which there is to be a detailed discussion hereafter.

The next point to which the honourable gentleman refers, is the subject of the advance from the bank to government. Upon this the honourable gentleman has indulged in a species of eloquence, which is almost as new to him, as is his congratulation on the prosperity of this country. He says that this resembles the system which was adopted in France, and leads to the despotism which, under the name of liberty, is carried on there. What similarity there is between the limited and voluntary advances of the bank, to an amount which would be shortly repaid, and the depreciated millions and milliards of the French government, I leave to him, and to those who are now convinced with him of the rapacity of

that system, and who have so lately thought it prudent to declaim against the French system, to discover. He says that this is a dangerous connection between the government and the bank; and he states the sum of three millions to be of an enormous amount for the bank to advance to government. He had forgot, not to say he never knew, for to a gentleman of so much research, that would be an extravagant supposition; but he seems to have forgotten, that the advances of the bank to government have never been less during the present war, than they are now proposed to be, under the very special nature and extraordinary circumstances of the present war. I ask, then, what does the honourable gentleman mean, by saying that this is a dangerous connection between government and the bank? Does he mean to say that the restriction on the bank ought no longer to continue? If he does not, I maintain that it is no dangerous connection whatever, since it will be of no inconvenience to the public while the restriction continues, for the public security is precisely the same as if this advance was not made by the bank at all.

But it seems the honourable gentleman could not face his constituents; that they would ask him, where he was when such a measure was proposed? [Where my *tongue* was, said Mr. Tierney.] It is not very material, Sir, which, as I should suppose where the honourable gentleman is, there his tongue must be also. He says that the measure is of such an alarming nature, that the sense of the house ought to be taken upon it at once; he says that I have a great desire to impose upon the house, and that I distrust my case. I have heard, Sir, that great eagerness for the dispatch of business is sometimes evidence that the party bringing it forward has some distrust of it; but that I should propose a plan that would give him time to prepare a speech, is an instance of distrust, which, considering the extent of his ingenuity, I could hardly have expected to be accused of. I cannot help thinking, that it is a little extraordinary he should first tell me that the measure I propose is unprecedented, and then tell me I am to blame for offering to the house time to come to a decision upon it, instead of calling for a decision immediately.

The honourable gentleman then tells us that this is a plan which cannot be effectual in the hands of his Majesty's present ministers, for that they are not qualified to carry it into effect. That there may be, and are, in his opinion, others better qualified, I have no doubt, and I have as little doubt that he would be ready to propose them if it depended upon him; but if his objections go against the man, it is hardly fair, upon that ground, to call upon the house to reject the measure. It seems I am not the person to make any proposals of this kind to the house. Why am I not the man? The question is, not who proposes the measure, but whether the measure ought to be adopted? But when the honourable gentleman comes to argue the question in that sense, and when he comes to lay before you the unexampled profusion of which he says I am the profligate author, I hope he will condescend to take in view the extent of the service for which we have had to provide, its extraordinary nature and character, as well as the great expense with which it has been attended, without forgetting the dearness of all the articles of provision, and various other things, at which it is not necessary at this moment to glance; but above all, at the extraordinary efforts, and corresponding expense.

But there is another part of the speech of the honourable gentleman, which contains an important objection to my continuing in the official situation in which I now stand, because, he says, while I remain in that situation, this country cannot have peace. If he thinks so, that is a good reason for his moving an address to remove me. Supposing this house to agree to that motion, there is no reason, I presume, why this house should not take care of the interests of the public, and still more why, supposing them to have no objection to the measure now before them, they should not agree to it. But there is a reason for apprehending that this country cannot have peace while I and my colleagues continue in office. Why cannot this country have peace while we continue in office? Because, in truth, we have not *the confidence of the enemy*. Sir, we cannot have the confidence of the enemy. The confidence of the enemy! No, Sir, that is im-

possible! We are not entering into the spirit of their rules, we are not disposed to promote their principles; we do not wish to imitate their system; we do not think it practical in England, however it may be made the subject of applause by those who favour it in their hearts, and, for the purpose of opposing England's true interest, the occasional theme of vindictive declamation, while it is wished that their principles should be adopted: which principles have been admired, and occasionally extolled, since the commencement of the revolution, by those who have opposed us. If the only claim to the support of the honourable gentleman in the prosecution of the war is, to deserve the confidence of the enemy; if it is necessary to admire the French revolution, which has been the root of all the evils of the present contest; if it is necessary to have asserted the justice of the enemy's cause; if the exertions of the war are to be entrusted to those who have, from the commencement of the contest, thwarted its prosecution, then, indeed, I am glad that we have not the vote of the honourable gentleman in our favour.

But the honourable gentleman says again, that there is no confidence in us in any part of Europe, and he proves it by shewing that all our allies have deserted us, and kept none of their engagements. This argument, if true, might go a good way towards shewing that we ought to have no confidence in them; but until he shews some instances of our want of good faith, I apprehend it does not prove that they have no confidence in us, and proves pretty nearly as much, as the argument that it is necessary that I ought to possess the confidence of his Majesty's enemies in France.

I think I am entitled now, in my turn, since the honourable gentleman has opposed the whole system of the plan which I have proposed, and especially as he is so much, and as it were exclusively, the friend of his country, to ask him, whether he has a better, or any in its stead? for he has stated none. Perhaps he has not had time to digest a proper plan; if he has any in contemplation, he cannot fairly object to the proposal which I make now, since he is to have time to prepare his own, which I trust

will be much better. But the honourable gentleman says, that if this plan should have been brought forward at all, it should have been brought forward much sooner. He acknowledges that in cases of great danger, great efforts ought to be made. Now, I think that in our former situation we were not in so much danger as we are at present, if we do not make great resistance ; and therefore it appears to me to be more sensible to make great efforts in time when they are necessary, than to make them when the circumstances of the time do not call for them, especially when by your financial operations, you are likely to bring the contest to a happy termination. But the honourable gentleman says, that this plan is to shew that we are at the end of our resources. If he thought so, he might have spared himself the trouble of pronouncing a panegyric upon these resources in the course of his speech this night. The honourable gentleman says, that this plan shews to the world that we are at the end of our funding system. The manner in which persons possessed of capital in different parts of the country have acted, in investing their property in your funds, is no proof that monied men think so; but proves, on the contrary, the confidence they have in your resources, and proves also, that wealth is generally diffused all over the country. This wealth is manifested in the improvement of your agriculture, in your buildings, in your canals, in your inclosures ; all these, I say, prove that you possess at this moment the confidence of monied men, that there is at this moment more wealth than there was at any former period in this country.

The resolution was agreed to, and a day was fixed for taking the several propositions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer into further consideration.

December 4, 1797.

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. PITT rose and spoke to the following effect :

Having upon a former day so fully stated to the committee the leading principles of the plan by which it is proposed to raise the supplies for the present year, what I have now to offer will be confined within a much narrower compass, and will consist in a detail of the particulars of what has been already stated in the outline. Before I proceed, however, in this detailed explanation, I wish to recapitulate shortly to the committee the general grounds on which the plan I have proposed is brought forward, and the principles on which its expediency ought to be determined. It is universally felt that great and unusual exertions are necessary; it is felt that this necessity is imposed upon us by no act, by no choice of our own; it is manifest to the world that the struggle we have to maintain, and the sacrifices we are called upon to make, are rendered inevitable by the unshaken obstinacy, by the inveterate animosity, and the insatiable ambition of the enemy with whom we contend. It is now proved beyond dispute, that the nature of the contest is such, that whatever efforts may be required, whatever sacrifices may be necessary, it is our duty to exert them to the fullest extent which the exigency may demand; and if we possess the smallest spark of the spirit of freemen, if we retain any remains of the character of Englishmen, we cannot hesitate in our determination. Since we are called upon to make such exertions, we have likewise the satisfaction of knowing, upon a review of the means which we possess to second the resolution we are compelled to adopt, that in every criterion of real wealth, of radical strength, of unimpaired vigour and resource, to oppose the unjust pretensions of an implacable enemy, there never was a period in which a nation was better prepared to maintain so important a contest. With such means in our power, I would likewise bring to the

recollection of the committee the objects which we ought to keep in view in the mode we employ of bringing them into action. I would desire you to recollect the importance of raising at least some part of the supplies of the year, without making too large additions to the capital of the funded debt. It is on the embarrassment of the funding system that the hopes of the enemy are founded. If, therefore, we are desirous to make the necessary exertion, in such a manner as will best tend to disappoint the hopes which the enemy have conceived, and to gain the object which we have in view, we shall find that it is our true policy to prevent such an accumulation of funded debt in the market, as would depreciate the public securities at present, and entail such permanent burdens as might cripple the exertions of the state at some future period.

Such then is the general outline of the object, which the plan I have proposed professes to have in view. From the principle on which it proceeds follows this natural conclusion, that we are bound to attempt to raise within the year such part of the supplies for the public service, as will confine the funding system within proper limits, and guard against the consequences which might be apprehended from its excess. If too we look at the present state of public finance, at the means of giving it vigour and stability; if we look at the means of strengthening and perpetuating the resources on which the greatness of the empire is founded, we shall be convinced, that it is important to consider in that part of the supplies which a loan may be employed to provide, what measures may be taken to prevent that accumulation, and whether some new modes of redemption may not be introduced, to prevent a perpetuation of the burthens to be incurred. Proceeding upon these principles, then, it remains to be discussed, what criterion is to be taken, in order to fix the plan by which the supply is to be raised. I formerly stated, that, for the purpose of fixing the proportions in which the burden should be imposed, an universal call for the disclosure of property would be inconvenient and imprudent. The question then is, what is the best mode of fixing the proportions, according to

which each individual shall be called upon to contribute? As a first criterion of the means and ability of those on whom the burthen ought to fall, I thought none more fair and reasonable than the rate of the assessed taxes; a mode, however, subject to abatement and modification, according as particular applications might demand. As a reason for adopting this criterion, I stated that these taxes were drawn from a very numerous class, that they were paid by about 800,000 masters of families, including a population, probably, of about four millions. This mode was likewise preferred, because it exempts altogether from contribution two or three millions of the poorer classes, whom it would be a principal object in any measure of taxation, to favour and relieve. In the next place, the payment of these taxes, in their different combinations of necessary or more voluntary expenditure, may afford a fair criterion of the ability of the contributors, and the proportions in which they ought to be called upon. The third object to be considered is, the means of modification which this principle admits in the cases where its application might be oppressive or unequal.

What then is the manner in which the burden is proposed to be distributed? From the consideration of this point, the committee will be able to judge, whether or not it includes the means of affording relief and mitigation to those classes whom it is an object of importance to favour. Gentlemen will recollect that I formerly stated the amount of the assessed taxes to be 2,700,000*l.*; to this there will be some addition, as the whole of what had been imposed last year, though in a train of collection, had not yet reached the treasury. This, from the receipts already collected, to the amount of four-fifths, might on the whole be estimated at 600,000*l.* From the completest information which could be derived from the papers upon the table, such might be the amount of the produce of these taxes. They consist of two kinds. The house tax, inhabited houses, commutation, or old duty, with the additional 10 per cent duties, amount to 1,500,000*l.* The remaining 1,300,000*l.* arises from male servants, horses, carriages, dogs, and watches. Upon

the latter class, it is proposed in general to triple the assessment, and to modify the former in proportion as they are combined with the payment of those of the latter description. In the former class, it is now proposed to include dogs and watches, though they are properly comprehended in the latter. The reason of this is, that, although in proportion to their number, they might be considered as a test of wealth, yet, there are many cases where only one is kept by persons paying the house duty. It would be unequal, therefore, to impose the triple rate in cases where dogs and watches were only kept in that small proportion which does not furnish any test of the ability of the contributor. This arrangement, however, will occasion no defalcation. It will only extend the modification to those cases where it is most to be desired that the burden should fall as light as possible.

After taking notice of this distinction, I shall now proceed to state what is the mode proposed for fixing the rate, in those cases where it is not intended to impose the triple assessment. Where the house, window, dog, and watch taxes, alone are hard, it is not intended to apply the triple assessment, unless the amount be more than 3*l*. Where not more than 1*l*. of assessed taxes is paid, it is proposed, that the proportion shall be no more than one half of the present rate. From 1*l*. to 2*l*. only a single rate, and from 2*l*. to 3*l*. a double rate. By considering the manner in which this mitigation applies, and the number of persons whom it comprehends, the committee will be able to judge of the extent of relief which it will afford. In order to place this matter in a more striking point of view, I shall state how many are comprehended in the class in whose favour it will operate. I have already stated that the whole contributors to the assessed taxes are about 800,000; out of these there will be 330,000 who will pay no more than half a rate, and consequently only one-sixth of the general average additional assessment. It will likewise be found that 130,000 will pay only the single rate, and 70,000 only the double; so that there are 530,000 to whom the abatement on the first rate will apply. After

reviewing the whole amount of the produce of the assessment, and the abatements which it may be necessary to allow, it will be seen, that the diminution upon the whole will be less than the amount of the sum originally reserved upon this head.

In order to attain the great object for which it is essential to provide, that of securing the efficiency of the means of raising the supply, and at the same time preventing the burden from pressing too severely on those whom it is important to relieve, another abatement will be found expedient. Before I proceed, however, I should next state, that it is proposed, that those who pay not only the house and window, the dog and watch tax, but also the other description of assessed taxes, should pay the triple assessment, taking 3*l.* to be the point at which this rate is to commence; it is clear that this class cannot apply to many who pay any considerable share of the voluntary or luxurious description of assessed taxes. Those who pay all the assessed taxes in all their respective heads, it is intended shall pay the triple rate. In this class there will be no abatement required, but, on the contrary, the contributors will be subject to an increase in proportion as the quantum which they pay supposes their ability: at what rate of expenditure this increase of contribution may be imposed, it is impossible to say with accuracy; but the best information which diligent inquiry can afford, will enable us to determine with a considerable degree of exactness. Those possessed of a thousand a year and upwards, will probably come under the description to whom the increased rate will apply; those under 30*l.* of assessed taxes being fixed at the triple rate; from 30*l.* to 50*l.* it is proposed that the rate should be three and a half instead of three; and where more than 50*l.* it is proposed to raise it to a quadruple assessment.

The plan thus is founded to distribute the proportion of contribution according to the rate of the present assessment, and the ability which the various modes in which these taxes are paid may be supposed to infer. Still, however, some farther connection will be necessary, to prevent the burden from falling too hard upon those classes which it may be wise and proper

to relieve. It is well known that the amount of the house-tax presses much more severely upon the inhabitants of the metropolis and of large cities, and upon particular trades, than upon the same classes in the country; that to persons of the same income, in different situations, the burden would press with the most vexatious and intolerable inequality. The only mode of correction which this inequality will admit, is to allow an abatement below the charge, on the class to which the parties entitled to it belong, upon a declaration, not that their income is confined to a certain sum, but that it does not exceed that sum below which it may be advisable to allow some mitigation. In any case where the rate of the house-tax would exceed a certain proportion of a man's income, it is proposed then that he shall be relieved by commissioners to be appointed for the purpose, in proportion to the rate of income corresponding to the class to which he will belong. Thus, if any person makes it appear that he is not worth 60*l.* a year, he will be entitled to total exemption. Where the income is 60*l.*, and below that sum which it is intended to regulate, the amount of the assessment will not exceed one 120th part of the person's income, or ten shillings. Where from peculiarity of circumstances, from the nature of the trade carried on in the metropolis and in large cities, persons pay even half rate, it is proposed that they should be relieved in proportion to their incomes, till the amount of income rose to 200*l.* a year. Those whose incomes exceed 200*l.* a year, to receive no abatement from the triple rate, unless they can shew that this demand would exceed a tenth of their income. The shortest way then will be to state the proportion of income and the rate of assessment, to prove to the committee the extent of reduction which the proposed regulations will admit:

Persons assessed to duties on male-servants, carriages, or horses, either separately, or with other assessed duties, where the amount of the duties shall not exceed

£ 30, shall be charged with a duty equal to three times the amount thereof.

£ 50, to three and a half.

Exceeding 50, to four times.

Persons assessed to any of the assessed duties now payable, and not assessed to the duties on servants, carriages, and horses, where the amount of the duty shall be

Under £1 per annum, shall be charged one half the amount thereof.

Under £2, shall be charged equal to the amount thereof.

Under £3, shall be charged twice the amount.

£3, and upwards, shall be charged three times the amount.

Persons whose annual income is less than 60*l.* shall be exempted from the additional duties. And,

Where their income amounts to more than 60*l.* the duties to be reduced in the following proportions:

Incomes from 60 to 65*l.* shall be reduced to a sum not exceeding one 120th part of 60*l.* or 10*s.*

70.....	1-95th
75.....	1-70th
80.....	1-65th
85.....	1-60th
90.....	1-55th
95.....	1-50th
100.....	1-45th
105.....	1-40th
110.....	1-38th
115.....	1-36th
120.....	1-34th
125.....	1-32dth
130.....	1-30th
135.....	1-28th
140.....	1-26th
145.....	1-24th
150.....	1-22dth
155.....	1-20th
160.....	1-19th
165.....	1-18th
170.....	1-17th

175-----1-16th

180-----1-15th

185-----1-14th

190-----1-13th

195-----1-12th

200-----1-11th

200, and upwards, 1-10th, or 20l.

Persons assessed after the 6th of April, 1798, to a greater amount than at present, to be subject to the additional duties therefrom.

Persons not assessed within the year ending 5th April, 1798, who shall be assessed in a subsequent year, to be liable to the additional duties from the commencement of the year in which they shall be assessed.

Persons surcharged to pay the additional duties for the amount of the surcharge.

The next consideration is in what manner the relief shall be applied. So far as it is to be in proportion to the rate of assessed taxes, the subject admits of the easiest calculation; but, as to the application of the scale of abatement, some mode must be fixed in which it is to take place. All that it is proposed to require then of the party claiming a mitigation, is no more than a declaration of his opinion of what his income may be. It seems advisable that this declaration should take place before some persons in each parish conversant with the circumstances of the parties, and qualified in some measure to judge of the fidelity of the declaration. This declaration and the degree of relief shall afterwards be published, in order that there may be an additional security against fraudulent declarations. This security cannot be deemed a hardship upon any man, nor be considered a demand beyond what the country is intitled to impose. If a man conceives his assessment to be more than he is able to pay, he must be contented to declare what part of his income it will form, in order to be intitled to the relief which he claims.

In the first outline of this plan, I stated that a past assessment was proposed to be taken as the future rate of payment. Upon

consideration, however, I am inclined to think that such an arrangement will neither be advisable nor necessary. All that is deemed necessary to prevent evasion, is a declaration upon oath, that the rate of assessment to which a man is subjected, does exceed a tenth part of his income.

With regard to this declaration, it will likewise be necessary to provide that in the statement of income, the sum which a man now pays to the assessed taxes shall not be included, as persons may, in some cases, stand assessed in a much higher proportion than corresponds to their incomes. An innkeeper, for instance, from the number of windows for which he pays, might be compelled to pay in a very unequal rate, were he forced to include what he now pays in the amount of his income. The same thing will apply whenever the average proportion of the tax exceeds the real income of the party, so that it is unnecessary to enter into the detail of the provisions which are intended to remedy this inconvenience.

As to the mode of appointing the commissioners who are to administer the relief to those who conceive themselves entitled to it, the principal object will be, that the persons to whom this task should be confided, should be acquainted with the neighbourhood, and with the parties who come before them for mitigation. There might even be no objection to those who are now employed to fix the rate of the assessed taxes; or if this should be deemed inexpedient, a number of housekeepers might be chosen out of that class which pays the highest proportion, and who would not be likely to sue for relief for themselves. Such a number might be chosen by lot to exercise this jurisdiction, and such divisions assigned as would enable them to act with information and knowledge. In this way a most respectable tribunal will be formed perfectly adequate to perform with fidelity and impartiality that duty which it is proposed to entrust to their care.

These seem to include all the points for which it will be necessary to provide in the way of regulation. In general, however, some regulation will be necessary to provide, that where persons become liable to higher rates of assessment than they now pay,

their contributions to the present plan will rise in that proportion.

It now remains to be considered, as far as can be calculated, what, in all the circumstances, may be the produce of the tax. I have stated that 2,700,000*l.* is the amount of the assessed taxes, exclusive of the new burdens imposed last year. On the supposition of a treble assessment on the whole, the amount would be 8,160,000*l.* From the amount at present is deducted 90,000*l.* as the charge of collection. It cannot be expected that with the additional trouble that will be occasioned an increase of remuneration will not be required by those who collect them, but certainly the same rate of poundage will not be necessary. As charges of management, then, two-thirds will be applicable to the tax. The general amount will thus be 8,400,000*l.* judging from the observations which have been made from the produce and rates of payment for near four-fifths of the kingdom; and making allowance for the diminution occasioned by the half rates, single rates, and double rates, the whole reduction will not be more than 900,000*l.* or a million. This would be the whole diminution, without taking into view the balance on the side of produce which must arise from the $3\frac{1}{2}$ quadruple rates paid, as they are upon extensive sums. From the effect of this balance, then, the whole of the produce will be about eight millions. Still indeed there is another abatement to be taken into view. In the cases where income does not amount to 60*l.* a year there will be a total exemption, and proportional deductions according as the incomes of contributors fall below the sums corresponding to the classes to which they belong. It is impossible to state any ground upon which these deductions can be calculated. Their amount must be wholly conjectural. So much, however, is certain, that means are thus provided for a very extensive scale of relief in different progressive stages. Thus we are sure that we obtain that essential object of preventing the burthen from pressing with severity upon those classes who ought to be exempted or relieved. The sum for which the whole produce is taken is seven millions. The sum, which upon the scale already stated it will produce, is

about eight millions, thus leaving 7 or 800,000*l.* to make any diminution which may arise from the abatements allowed, and to make allowance for such modifications as circumstances may require. Against any diminution which may be calculated upon the above heads, it may not be improper to consider the improvement which the assessed taxes will receive from the redoubled attention to their collection which may be expected to take place. These taxes have in many instances been evaded to a degree beyond all conception. In consequence of the enquiries which some late measures had occasioned, very important discoveries were made of the evasions practised in this branch of the revenue, which more recent investigations have tended to confirm. Every gentleman who looks at those who pay in the rank with himself must be satisfied, that more than the amount of the sum requisite to give every proper allowance to those who deserve mitigation, by putting an end to that evasion which has been so extensively practised, will be gained; and sure I am there must be but one mind and one exertion to counteract and to defeat such fraudulent attempts. The call upon the possessors of horses, in consequence of the measures lately taken for the defence of the country, led to the discovery of very scandalous evasions of the revenue. I have heard of instances of this kind in cases so aggravated from the persons involved, and the rank of life in which they stood, that it would be impossible for any man to learn the particulars without mingled feelings of shame and indignation. Many of the persons guilty of these frauds are probably deterred from a discovery by a dread of the penalties they have incurred. Perhaps, therefore, it may be politic to hold out some encouragement to those who shall give a fair account of the duties to which they are liable. This I state merely to shew that there is reason to believe that the accuracy of collection which will now be established, will serve in a very considerable degree to supply the deficiency which the application of relief to those who require it, may occasion.

Nothing more remains but to state one additional modification, for which indeed there is no separate resolution, but the pro-

priety of which the committee will perceive. It is a distinction in favour of those whose establishments are increased by numerous families. It might be proper therefore to adopt some regulation for those who have a certain number of children, and those who have no children at all, and to proportion the scale to the largeness of family, when those who have a certain number of children apply for relief. I would propose, therefore, that, if entitled to that mitigation which they claim, they should be reduced in a rate below that to which by their income they would belong, and that those who have no families should be placed in a rank above that which they would otherwise occupy.

Having now explained the different points of regulation and modification which the scheme I have submitted to the committee will admit, I again desire gentlemen to keep in mind that if I am right in my idea of the necessity of raising within the year at least a certain proportion of the supplies of the year, the first question that occurs is, How is such a thing to be done? We are to inquire whether there can be a call upon income more general, more equitable, and more effectual, and at the same time more safe, than that which the plan before you contains? If a visible criterion must be selected, can there be any one more comprehensive, more capable of modification, more applicable to the cases which may call for exception or relief, than that which is now submitted to your opinion? Thirdly, can any system of correction be devised that better meets the inconveniencies which might arise from individual applications than the present? Such are the questions for your decision. The effort to be exerted is doubtless a great one. Seven millions, in whatever mode it is to be raised, is a great sum to be taken out of the pockets of the people. We must determine by some effort or other to provide the sum which the public service requires. Do we think then that to raise seven millions in this manner is an effort that ought not to be made, if by such an effort we shall be enabled to maintain the contest with more success, and to pursue it to a more speedy termination than by any other mode of exertion? If we are satisfied on these points we shall not listen to any general ob-

jections, such as those that large contributions are always great grievances to the people. What we should consider is, whether less ought to be taken to maintain with vigour, and to prosecute to a successful termination, a contest for the preservation of the whole, for the safety of ourselves, and for the interest of posterity? We ought then to examine the subject carefully, jealously, and accurately, but with a fixed determination not to be deterred by the magnitude of the sacrifice; with a firm determination to follow up the principle of mitigating the burthen where relief ought to be applied, and of acting up to the full extent of the pledge which we have given; with a firm determination to exert every effort that may be required by the novelty of the crisis in which we are placed, and the magnitude of the objects for which we contend. Having said so much, I shall detain the committee no longer, but move the first resolution.

The committee divided on the first resolution,

Ayes ----- 214

Noes ----- 15

The other resolutions were then severally passed.

December 5, 1797.

THE report of the Committee of Ways and Means was brought up, and the resolutions in it were read.

MR. PITT then, (in answer to a question put to him by Mr. Hussey, respecting the application of the sinking fund for the reduction of the national debt), entered into a statement of the different calculations which he laid before the house when he opened the plan of triple assessment, and expatiated upon the advantages of applying the produce of the sinking fund to the reduction of the debt. He recapitulated his former observations upon that head. He said, he wondered that any idea should have gone abroad any where, that any interruption was to be made to the operation of the sinking fund. It had been beneficially applied for the reduction of the debt now for eleven years, four of which were years of war. It was to be continued in its

full vigour. If this example of national firmness should be followed in any future war, and we should be able to terminate the present contest in a way that might afford us a chance of having a secure interval of peace—real, genuine, not a nominal or delusive peace, for a considerable length of time, the operation of the sums that might be applied, as those of the sinking fund had been, would be wonderful.

Mr. Hussey declared his alarm at the term “nominal or delusive peace,” when peace at all events was so essentially requisite; and reminded the Chancellor of the Exchequer of a former assertion he had used, and of the flattering calculations he had built upon it (in which opinion he, Mr. Hussey, concurred with him at the time) that this country had every prospect of continuing long to enjoy the blessings of a profound peace.

MR. PITT replied:—I remember the declaration to which the honourable gentleman refers. It was made by me in the year 1792. It was at a time when I proposed, what was extremely agreeable to me, a diminution in the existing burdens of the public, and a continuation of the sum allotted to the discharge of the public debt. I did not pretend to assure the house that peace was at all events to be uninterrupted for any given number of years—that would have been an extravagant and ill-founded assurance—but I thought, under the then apparent obvious political circumstances of all Europe, there never appeared a fairer prospect of the continuance of peace for a long interval. That in that conjecture I was disappointed, is most undoubtedly true; for which, however, I ought not to take shame to myself upon the suggestion of the honourable gentleman, since he himself acknowledges he was deceived also. Why were we both deceived? Because many of us beheld, with a degree of favourable feeling, the rising establishment of what was then a popular government in France, and saw principles of a pleasing nature in their appearance, but the extent of which, and the views of their professors, were not then developed—principles which professed economy at home, and peace abroad. We did not then see the seeds of that wide-spread harvest which has since been reaped; of that unbounded ambition abroad, and pro-

fligate profusion and plunder at home. What then is the inference? Because I thought that there was a prospect of peace in 1792, when appearances were in its favour, was I to conclude that I should be disappointed by a subsequent appearance of ambition, turbulence, and phrenzy? Are we to say now, that we ought to have scruples in opposing that violence? that we are not to judge of present as well as past appearances? I am as impatient for the hour of peace as that honourable gentleman, or as any man in this house, or in this country. I have as much reason as any man in this country can have, for wishing to see peace return, when it is accompanied by security. But when I say, I do not wish to see a "nominal and delusive peace," it is because I value peace. I do not wish to have peace proclaimed for a moment, in order to unnerve your strength, to slacken your efforts, to disband your force, to expose you to sudden and violent hostility, without your present means of defence, or any effectual resistance. Should peace be proclaimed without security, you may indeed have a peace that is nominal and delusive. I wish, for the benefit of Europe—I wish, for the benefit of the world at large, and for the honour of mankind, as well as for the happiness of the people of France, although now your enemies, but who are objects of compassion—I wish, I say, that the present spirit of their rulers, and the principles they cherish, may be extinguished, and that other principles may prevail there. But whether they do so or not, is more immediately their concern than ours. It is not to any alteration in that country, but to the means of security in this, that I look with anxiety and care. I wish for peace, whether their principles be good or bad; but not to trust to their forbearance. Our defence should be in our own hands. In that we shall find the bulwark of our safety against France, whatever may be the pride, ambition, or animosity of that power against us, and which it has manifested in almost all the periods of its history; and I agree with what has been lately said, that its tone was never higher than it is at present. Certainly much depends upon the posture in which you converse of peace. What is the real foundation of the strength

of a nation? Spirit, security, and conscious pride, that cannot stoop to dishonour. It comprehends a character that will neither offer nor receive an insult. Give me peace consistently with that principle, and I will not call it a peace “nominal or delusive;” and there is no man who will go farther than I will to obtain it. To any thing dishonourable I will never submit; nor will this country ever submit to it, I trust. There can be no man who has an English heart within his bosom who can wish it; or can wish that you may, by an untimely diminution of your strength, expose yourselves to the renewal, with aggravated insults, of those evils which we have already had too much reason to deplore.

December 14, 1797.

ON a motion for the second reading of the bill for increasing the assessed taxes, a long and animated discussion took place.

After Mr. Fox had delivered his sentiments in reprobation of the measure, MR. PITT rose:—

Before I proceed to make any remark upon the wide variety of topics which the honourable gentlemen upon the other side of the house have introduced, I shall just advert to the last point on which the right honourable gentleman* insisted. The other parts of his speech were directed against the whole of the measure in substance, but in the latter part he separately urged the propriety of delay. The right honourable gentleman founds this argument for delay upon the agitation which this question has excited in the public mind, and the objections to which the measure is liable in its application to a great number of his constituents. I am aware, that in all great towns, particularly in the metropolis, the objections will be felt with peculiar force; but at the same time I am sensible that in the provisions of which the bill is susceptible, many modifications may be expected, many are practicable consistently with the leading principle of the measure, and many are necessary in

* Mr. Fox.

order, as far as possible, to prevent it from bearing hard in particular instances. I am aware even that greater modifications may be necessary than appeared to me requisite upon the first consideration of the subject, and when the first imperfect outline of it was presented. This, however, does not by any means tend to impeach the general principle of the measure. These objections are capable of modification without defeating the salutary object, which it is the purpose of the measure to secure. Instead of feeling these objections as completely destructive of the principle, every hour's reflection convinces me, that though it is our duty to enquire in what respects modification may be proper, how it may be practicable, how mitigation may be given so as to prevent any oppressive application of the measure, yet as to the general necessity of providing for the public safety, and repelling the danger by which we are threatened, on the determination we shall form upon this question after mature discussion depends, whether by the exertions we have pledged ourselves to make, we shall rescue the country from impending calamity, and lay the foundation of as great a portion of future greatness and prosperity as any nation ever enjoyed, or whether we shall surrender the dignity of the British nation, and expose to inevitable ruin the sources of its glory and its power. Feeling as the representatives of the people, that it is our duty to provide for these important and essential objects, we shall be deterred by no difficulties, we shall spare no pains, we shall sacrifice every local prejudice, every partial opinion, to a consciousness of the necessity in which we are placed, to make a vigorous exertion. Feeling as I do that necessity, I know my duty too well not to persist in what I conceive to be a measure calculated to save the country from the present danger, and to enable it to struggle against future attacks. It is our first duty, as guardians, to provide for its present safety, and to transmit to posterity the blessings which we have enjoyed, and the means of preserving them. It is by these considerations that our conduct ought to be directed; it is by these great maxims of policy that the measure ought to be judged.

Can we then conceive it our duty, on account of some particular objections of some alleged hardship of application, to hang up the bill altogether before its provisions have been discussed, before its details have been arranged? Must we forego the opportunity of suggesting the case where the evil would be felt, of removing prejudice where it exists, and obviating objections where they are well-founded? Instead of agreeing to any delay, both in real respect to those who complain of the hardship with which the bill in its present shape would attach, and in duty to the public, for whose service in this important crisis we are called upon to provide, we ought to lose no time to examine the bill with the utmost attention, and see where the pressure which it would occasion may be mitigated. What are the particulars and extent of the farther modifications which it may still be necessary to introduce, it will not be incumbent upon me now to state. It will be recollected that, when I first opened the subject, I stated that, as a visible criterion of income, I preferred the payment of the assessed taxes, because it was more comprehensive, better calculated to diffuse the burden, and more susceptible of modification in the various classes where it would be required, than any other criterion which could be taken. It will be recollected, not by the honourable gentleman,* who had thought it proper to absent himself from his attendance in parliament, but it will be recollected by the house, that one great recommendation of this criterion I stated to be, that the principle being still preserved, it furnished greater means of modification, more opportunity for providing for the particular cases of hardships and inconvenience, than any other criterion which could be adopted. The means of this modification are now in our power, and we shall but perform our duty to our constituents, by shewing our readiness to consider the inconvenience, and to apply the remedy. That many modifications are necessary I am aware, and in the committee, both those which I may propose, and which others may suggest, will be considered. This I trust will be a sufficient answer to what fell from a worthy alderman†

* Mr. Fox,

† Alderman Lushington.

at the beginning of the debate. Much as I differ from that honourable gentleman as to the extent of the abatement, and the nature of the scale of contribution he proposed, I was glad to hear the manly and decided manner in which he enforced the necessity of great exertion, and the propriety of raising a considerable sum, without recurring to the system of funding. I am convinced that the sentiments he expressed were congenial to the feelings of a great majority of his constituents and of the country; and I could not help remarking the contrast between the language he held, and the tone of the honourable gentleman* on the other side, compared with the sentiments of their respective constituents, in the indiscriminate opposition to every part of the plan, which characterized the speeches of both the honourable gentlemen.

Having made these observations on the question of delay, I shall proceed shortly to consider some of the other topics on which the honourable gentlemen insisted. I do not complain of the wide field of argument which they took up; I know that in a parliamentary sense they were regular: whether they were justifiable in the use they made of this privilege, and whether they made a proper choice of the topics which they introduced on the present subject, I shall leave for the house to determine. The object of this bill shortly is, an extraordinary grant of money for the support of the war; it proposes to raise within the year a certain part of the supplies, by a tax on income, on the visible criterion of the assessed taxes, subject to modification as circumstances may require. In considering the whole of the case, then, the first question that occurs is, whether it is proper to grant any money at all? Then, whether the principle of raising a certain part within the year ought to be admitted? And, thirdly, whether by this criterion attaching to income in the course of expenditure, the burden would in general be fairly apportioned?

As to the first point, whether any money at all ought to be granted, the honourable gentleman, † though he did not say so in

* Mr. Fox.

† Mr. Sheridan.

very words, by the whole of his argument supposed the negative. The right honourable gentleman who spoke last distinctly argued, that while ministers continued in power, he could not agree to any supplies being granted. In stating this to have been their meaning, I am endeavouring to do justice to their mode of reasoning. Unless upon this idea, more than three-fourths of their observations were irrelevant to the subject now before the house. If they do not contend that peace cannot be obtained by the present ministers, that they ought to be dismissed before any scheme of supply can at all be a fit subject for discussion, the greater part of their argument is quite foreign to the matter now under consideration.

The right honourable gentleman, while he argues that my honourable friend* considered the majority of the house and his Majesty's ministers as the same, forgets that his honourable friend†, when he talked of our going out of our places, did not address himself to the house, but gave it, as a very friendly advice no doubt, personally to us. It was expressed with a hope that we would of ourselves abandon the offices we held, as the means of obtaining peace. The honourable gentleman then must settle this inconsistency with his honourable friend beside him. But before the honourable gentleman, with all his talents, can demonstrate the propriety of our dismissal, he ought to shew that the nine persons, whom he proposes to pick up between London and Windsor, will administer the public affairs better than those by whom they are now administered; he must bring forward something more conclusive and more convincing than any thing he had to offer when the dismissal of ministers was last discussed, the failure of which attempt had induced him to quit the service of his constituents, and his despair of success had led him to abdicate his public character. If I understand him right, he considers as preliminary to every measure of public defence, to every exertion in support of the war, a radical change is necessary. What the right honourable gentleman means by this preliminary, expressed in a manner so large and comprehensive,

* Mr. Dundas.

† Mr. Sheridan.

in terms no less obscure than undefined; whether a parliamentary reform is to be only a part of this sweeping change; how this change of system is to operate as a means of saving the country; how this unlimited change is to conduce to the public safety in preparing exertion and in repelling danger, I am really at a loss to conceive. In considering the propriety of such a change of system, or such a preliminary as the introduction of new men into office, it certainly will be important for the house to ascertain, whether such a change of ministers is calculated to secure us against the dangers with which we are threatened, whether it is calculated to check the ambition of the enemy, and to procure a peace that will satisfy the honour of the nation, and preserve the sources of the public wealth and prosperity.

But the honourable gentleman says, that the whole tenor of our language at the beginning of the present contest was, that no peace could be made with the jacobin republic, and that France is thus justified in refusing to make peace with the present administration. At no period of the war did we ever express such a sentiment, or even entertain the idea that no peace could be made with republican France. I remember the quotation from Virgil to which he has alluded, and as far as I can recollect it was used in one of those debates in which the right honourable gentleman proposed that overtures should be made for peace at a period when we contended that no security for peace could be obtained, and that the evils of war were not to be compared to the inadequate peace which then could have been concluded. The right honourable gentleman then urged the question, whether no extremity of danger could induce us to make such overtures? I then answered, that this must ever be a question of comparison, that we must decide as circumstances might arise, and at least we ought to persevere till our means were exhausted, till we could support the contest no longer, and we could say,

Toto certatum est corpore regni.

The honourable gentleman says, that the meaning of Virgil cannot be explained away, but he seemed to think that Virgil's lan-

guage might be improved. The honourable gentleman urged the propriety of making overtures even at that period, and contended, as he often had done, that if reasonable terms of peace were refused, it would unite England and divide France. He then retorted, that after such overtures were rejected,

Toto certandum est corpore regni.

The honourable gentleman has now seen these overtures made and rejected; and now, when he wishes to bind me down to the meaning of Virgil, I think he ought not to forget his Latin pledge.

If the honourable gentleman has seen that all attempts at negotiation have been unavailable, if he can look to any period in which he is called upon to fulfil his pledge, if he means to animate the public exertions, to exhort to perseverance, to stimulate their zeal for the maintenance of the national honour and the national safety, at a moment when these objects are thus unequivocally stated, he would not, as he now does, attempt to disarm their courage and to distract their efforts. What did the honourable gentleman expect from the overtures he proposed? What degree of insult and contumely did he lay his account to endure before he was to be roused to energy and to honour? Did he expect any thing more insulting than the reception our overtures had obtained, any thing more repulsive, more haughty, more injurious, than the proceedings of the enemy; any thing more decisive of their determined spirit of hostility than their refusal to discuss the terms we proposed, or to propose any terms in their turn, on which they were willing to conclude a peace? If any thing can meet the honourable gentleman's ideas of insult, sufficiently humiliating to require him to act upon his pledge, let him look to the negociation at Lisle, and the conduct of the enemy upon that occasion. The honourable gentleman, though he admitted formerly that there might be occasions to demand unanimity and exertion, thinks himself freed from his pledge, because ministers were never sincere in their exertions for peace, and France was justified in refusing to treat

with them. But when did the honourable gentleman discover this? When did the light flash upon his mind, that ministers originally were hostile to the republican government of France, and therefore could not be sincere? It is somewhat surprising that this never occurred to the honourable gentleman before the pledge was given, instead of discovering it as our apology for eluding the pledge after it was given. If the dislike of ministers to French principles proves their aggression, and justifies the hostility of the enemy, this cannot be a new discovery; it certainly would as well have justified the honourable gentleman in distrusting any efforts they might make, even while they urged the overtures, on the refusal of which they promised unanimity, as now when they have seen their overtures made without effect. The declaration of France, at the beginning of the contest, proved that on their side it was a war of aggression, and on our's a war of necessity and good faith towards our allies. If ministers did at first see the danger of French principles, without embarking in the contest, must they have been the aggressors when they saw their fears realized in the actual aggression, in which the principles they had apprehended finally terminated? At no period of the contest did we say there could be no peace with republican France. We said, that for peace we would not agree to prostrate the nation at the feet of the enemy; that we could not agree to give up what was essential to the safety of the country. If the honourable gentleman can prove that we have applied for peace, disowning the justice of our cause, abandoning the principles on which the present safety and future prosperity of the country are founded, he would prove that we considered the period arrived when every exertion had been made, and when the struggle was to be given up, because it could no longer be supported. The honourable gentleman, however, does not say that we have acted in this manner. What then are the opinions of those who have uniformly, or rather with growing zeal and devotion, contended that the war was just on the part of France, and unjust upon the side of this country? Have they not repeatedly said, on former occasions, that our ordinary

resources were exhausted? And to-day, with mysterious silence, they pass over the subject, and cautiously decline giving any opinion on the efficacy of former resources, while they reprobate new expedients; and say nothing about the propriety of resorting to the funding system, while they condemn the principle of every plan by which it may be relieved.

The honourable gentlemen have said, that our ordinary sources are exhausted, and that no extraordinary resources can be employed. I leave it to the house then to judge how far those, who in principle give the enemy a right to ask all, who, by decrying our resources, give them confidence to advance every pretension, by kindly informing them, that from our inability to resist, they may extort whatever they demand, are the true friends to their country, or the enlightened advocates of peace? I am convinced that the majority of the house and of the country will feel that peace is not likely to be obtained upon terms consistent with our honour or our safety, by dismissing ministers, if they are to be followed by men who have ever viewed with kindness the principles of the enemy;—by men who have justified every act of the enemy, while they have traduced every measure of the British government;—by men who have extolled the resources of the French, with a zeal equalled only by the perseverance with which they have depreciated the energy and the resources of their own country. Whatever opinions such men profess to have of the sincerity of ministers, of their capacity for the conduct of affairs; whatever conclusions they may draw from the review of the finances and the magnitude of our expenses I leave it to the country and to the world to determine, whether, under such auspices, there could be any chance of peace upon terms short of the basest humiliation to an insolent foe, and the most criminal surrender of every principle of national honour, and every source of national greatness.

The honourable gentleman speaks of peace as absolutely necessary; but has the honourable gentleman explained how peace is to be obtained? After encouraging the perseverance of the enemy in their wild and destructive designs, by holding out how

little resistance we can oppose to their attempts, the honourable gentleman says not a word of this. He thinks he does his duty to his country and his constituents, by enforcing the necessity of peace, without saying a syllable of the means of pacification. Because he thinks peace cannot be obtained without a change of system, he would in the mean time suspend all grants of supply. After disavowing every opinion we have pronounced, after recanting every principle we have maintained, after abandoning every pledge we have given, after neglecting every means of defence, and renouncing every manly exertion, how would the honourable gentleman have us appease the fury of the enemy, and secure the safety of England? Why there must be a total change of system in England and Ireland! Till Ireland was in a better situation France could have no inducement to make peace! What this change, so mysteriously announced, is to be in detail, we are left to guess. Are you to neglect the means of defence, if you cannot persuade the enemy to make peace. The change which the honourable gentleman recommends, I suspect would be to remove those distinctions, and to sweep away those privileges which have raised the hatred and envy of France. But the honourable gentleman contends that the French would be justified in refusing to make peace, because Ireland is not unanimous; would he, however, consider ministers justified in refusing to make peace, because La Vendee was in a state of insurrection? If in his eyes this would be an insufficient reason for refusing to make peace with France, when nearly one-fourth of its inhabitants were in a state of open hostility against the tyranny under which they were oppressed, will he say that it is a reason for the persevering hostility of the enemy, that Ireland is in a state of danger, arising from the necessary exertion of vigour to resist the operation of French principles diffused every where with such assiduity, and in Ireland with peculiar success;—circulated with that industry, which they have ever shewn, to supplant by their desolating principles of liberty the real practical blessings of the British constitution?

Mr. Pitt declared, he could not conceive how that degree of

perfect unanimity, which the right honourable gentleman seemed to think so necessary, could be obtained while these principles were disseminated with such industry; but this was not the time to enter into this discussion, and he had only alluded to this subject, to shew the consistency of the right honourable gentleman's argument, when applied to the case of La Vendee. But after all, did the right honourable gentleman seriously imagine, that he had convinced the house that it was unnecessary for them to make great efforts? He had relied much upon the declarations which had been made out of doors respecting this tax: as far as the public opinion accorded with the right honourable gentleman's views, so far he seemed inclined to treat it with respect; but he totally laid out of his consideration those sentiments which accompanied those declarations. Though, in some instances, the people had expressed their disapprobation of this tax, in its present state, without any of the alterations and modifications which it would be necessary to make, yet they never went the length of the right honourable gentleman, and said, that no supplies ought at all to be raised; on the contrary, in the case of the borough of Southwark, they had expressed the strongest sense of the necessity of making great and vigorous exertions for the public defence. Could this be a subject of doubt, after all the papers relative to the rupture of the negociation had been laid before the house, and above all, since they had seen the late proclamation of the directory? Indeed, he should feel ashamed if it could now become matter of argument.

If then it might be assumed, as an indisputable proposition, that great and vigorous exertions were necessary at the present arduous crisis, the next point for consideration was, whether a large part of the supplies of the year ought to be raised by the mode now proposed, within the year; or whether the whole should be raised by the old system of funding? This was the real question for consideration: but, instead of discussing it, the gentlemen on the other side had exerted all their abilities to prove that we ought to make no efforts at all. They had never

given any answer to the only important question, viz. if great exertions were necessary, how were they to be made? Instead of this, they had only said, that a proposal to depart from the funding system came with a very bad grace from him, who had funded so much. This could not be considered as a very strong argument; and he should have thought, that the gentlemen, after so long an absence from their parliamentary duty, would have discovered some more efficacious mode of reasoning, than to say, "Do not adopt a good measure, because you ought to have adopted it sooner." Surely the house had a right to expect, from a grave and experienced statesman, something more than a declaration, that if any means could be devised to raise a large proportion of the supplies within the year, and if these means were in their nature unobjectionable, he should not oppose them. This could not be considered as a very great instance of condescension. However, the principal objection of the right honourable gentleman seemed to be, that those extraordinary means ought not to be resorted to now, when a great and obvious necessity existed, because we had not employed them when no such necessity did exist.

But gentlemen seemed to consider, that, by adopting the present mode of raising a part of the supply, the system of funding was to be given up, and the present substituted in its room. If gentlemen had been present in their places when this measure was first proposed, they would have known that the funding system was not given up; on the contrary, he had proposed that the larger part of the supplies of the year should be raised by way of loan. It was thought advisable, as the funds had been so much increased, to ease them, by procuring a large part of the supplies in a different mode; therefore, so far from giving up the system of funding, the present plan was intended to relieve it. That this object, if it could be attained, would be most desirable, could not be questioned, even by those who disliked the present tax.

Having said thus much, he did not think it necessary to argue this point more at length upon the present occasion. The point

that called particularly for the consideration of the house was this;—assuming that it was necessary to raise a large sum within the year, was the present plan, the most expedient, and the most likely to be effectual? In considering this subject, the two honourable gentlemen on the other side had argued very differently. The first called it a tax upon property; the other, a general tax upon income. The latter was nearer the truth, but neither of them was correct. With respect to the honourable gentleman who called this a tax upon property, it was astonishing that he should be so ill informed of what passed in that house, even though he was absent, as to state as arguments against this plan, the very topics which he (Mr. Pitt) had urged in order to obviate some objections which had been made to it. The honourable gentleman had contended, that a tax upon property, supposing it possible that the amount of the property could be ascertained, would not be a proper measure. In this opinion, however, the honourable gentleman differed from those declarations out of doors against this tax, upon which so much reliance had been placed on the other side of the house. However, the honourable gentleman had pushed this argument to a greater length than he had done. He (Mr. Pitt) had said, that if the amount of every man's property could be ascertained, it would be a most desirable thing to make the people contribute to the public exigence in proportion to their wealth. But there existed no means of ascertaining the property of individuals, except such as were of a nature that could not be resorted to. Instead, therefore, of a tax upon property, this was what he had stated it to be, a tax upon general expenditure. In opening it to the house, he had anticipated an objection which he thought would be made, viz. that this tax applied only to such income as was in expenditure. This was an inconvenience which it was impossible to avoid, without having recourse to such a scrutiny of property as must, in every point of view, be highly objectionable. That the present plan was in its nature imperfect he was ready to admit, and had stated it to be so when he first introduced the subject; but he thought it the best and most gene-

ral criterion that could be found. The question then was, whether this plan was so very imperfect, and so objectionable in principle, that it ought immediately to be rejected; or whether, after proper alteration and modification, it might not be of the greatest public benefit? The right honourable gentleman opposite to him had not considered this with his usual accuracy; for, because this tax was calculated at seven millions, and that it was not to exceed a tenth part of a person's income, he had calculated the whole income of the country at only seventy millions; but the inaccuracy of this calculation must be obvious to the right honourable gentleman, when he recollected, that though this tax never took more than one-tenth of the income, yet, in many cases it took only the 120th part, and in some cases took nothing. At all events, this observation was inapplicable, because he had never spoken of the general income of the country, but only so much of it as was in expenditure. Without dilating more upon this part of the subject, he should say a few words upon what he considered as the leading objections to the measure.

The right honourable gentleman had made a division of the different kinds of property, which appeared to him to be incorrect, inasmuch as it omitted one great source of income. The right honourable gentleman's division was, income arising from landed estates, from commercial pursuits, and from property in the funds. As to the income derived from professional exertions, the right honourable gentleman had very properly classed it under the head of commercial gains. But he had omitted one great source of income, viz. that which was received as the reward of labour; and of the latter class many were exempted by the criterion now proposed. The right honourable gentleman had contended, that this would operate as a tax upon funded property, which always had been, and must ever be, considered as inviolate. But the measure now proposed by no means tended to affect property in the funds. No description of income, whether arising from landed estates, commercial pursuits, or funded property, was meant to be exempted from the operation, because it

was meant to attach upon expenditure in general. Where was the injustice of this? "Why," says the right honourable gentleman, "by taxing the expenditure of a man whose income is derived from the funds, you do in fact tax his property in the funds." If this was a valid objection, it ought not only to induce the house to reject this measure, but to repeal every tax that ever was laid on; because it was impossible to suggest a tax which would not be paid by people having money in the funds. Every tax imposed upon consumption, of course must be defrayed by people having property in the funds; but it was absurd to say that was a tax upon the funds. If this objection was never made to taxes which were in their nature perpetual, it appeared to him singular that it should now, for the first time, be made to a tax which was merely temporary.

The next objection of the right honourable gentleman was, that a tax upon commercial income was not just; for, said he, a man's landed property is his own, but the income he derives from commerce is partly derived from his industry. This was not a time to enter into a minute discussion of these arguments, but surely the right honourable gentleman did not mean to contend that commercial gains were not a fair object of taxation. Those gains were derived under the protection of the laws of the country, and consequently ought to contribute proportionably to support them. He did not, however, mean to contend that many distinctions ought not to be made, and in the committee modifications would undoubtedly be proposed. As to persons who employed great capitals, in proportion to their annual gains, they would be less affected than persons of landed property; but all that could be inferred from this was, that it was a recommendation of the criterion. Perhaps this criterion, as far as it affected the lower classes, did not make distinctions enough. It would be recollected, that the particular reason he assigned for making this tax lower upon houses than upon the other articles was, that it should not fall too heavily upon that species of income arising from retail trade. The right honourable gentleman had next censured the mode of appeal given in this case. Some alterations might

also be made upon this subject; but still he thought that mode of correcting the operation of the tax might be useful. The right honourable gentleman himself had admitted, that it might with propriety be applied to landed property; and, on the other hand, he (Mr, Pitt) was willing to admit, that as far as it related to the lower class of retail dealers, some modification was necessary. These were the general objections which had been made to the plan, and he should now leave them to the consideration of the house, with the observations he had made upon them.

He was aware that there were many who thought that, rather than take this visible criterion of ascertaining property, it would be better to lay a general tax upon property. Undoubtedly, if they could find the means of taxing property equally, without compelling improper disclosure, it would be a most desirable object; but as that could not be done without being open to stronger objections than the present plan, it became necessary that some visible criterion should be found. If that were the case, could any criterion be found more general in its nature than the assessed taxes? The persons immediately affected by this tax amounted to 800,000, and through them extended to about 4,000,000 of persons. By this plan a great number of poor persons would be wholly excluded, and above half of the number before-mentioned would contribute very little.

The committee upon this bill might, and he had no doubt would, make many amendments in favour of shop-keepers; but all this would be consistent with the principle of the bill. The committee might, if they thought proper, make an alteration in the scale proposed, without any dereliction of the principle of the bill. Many mitigations were, undoubtedly necessary; but if the utmost inference that could be drawn from this was, that the exemptions should be carried farther than was proposed in the committee of ways and means, how did that affect the general principle of the measure, when they had the means of obviating in the committee the only objections that had been made against it? Without going now into those details, which he wished to reserve for a future period, he should only say, that if it was admitted

that great exertions ought to be made, and that a large part of the supplies ought to be raised within the year, and if the only objection to this criterion was, that it would bear hard upon the lower orders of retail dealers, and it appeared to be within their power to obviate this objection; then, upon what ground could they hesitate, unless they had changed their opinions; unless, instead of making preparations for war, they were determined to begin by begging for peace from a haughty and insulting enemy? If they were not determined to give up every means of exertion, had they any option but to go into a committee upon this bill, to remedy the inconveniencies that might result from it, if passed in its present shape? What was the conduct which the gentlemen on the other side wished the house to adopt? It was to reject this measure at once, and thereby to declare that they would make no efforts to raise the supplies within the year. If the house adopted this advice, it would be proclaiming to France and to the world, their repentance for having dared to stand up in defence of their laws, their religion, and of every thing that was valuable to them as Englishmen. It would be humbling themselves before a haughty adversary; and, when they had no means of defence, imploring mercy and forgiveness from an enemy from whom we had to expect neither.

Upon these grounds, he hoped the house would read the bill a second time, and let it go into a committee.

The motion was agreed to,

Ayes 175

Noes 50

and the bill was ordered to be committed.

January 4, 1798.

ON a motion for the third reading of the bill for increasing the Assessed Taxes,

MR. PITT, at the close of the debate, (which had been adjourned from the preceding day) rose and expressed himself as follows:—

After the great length of time that has been consumed in the debate, the house, I am sure, will not be surprised if I should

desire to avoid, as much as possible, the vast mass of extraneous matter that has been brought forward on the present occasion, and select from the numerous topics that present themselves to my view, such as bear directly on the subject under our immediate consideration. With this view I shall endeavour to guide the attention of the house through the various irrelevant and contradictory arguments that have been used, and fix it more exclusively on those leading and practical points, which alone can determine the question we are now called upon to decide. I should have thought it, Sir, unnecessary to enter at any length into this argument, after the admission made by the several gentlemen who most vehemently opposed this measure, if I did not find that the principle they conceded in name is afterwards recalled in substance, and treated as a matter foreign to their consideration, and wholly inapplicable to the case now before them. The principle I allude to is this, whether, in the present circumstances of this country, there is, or is not an occasion to make a great and unexampled exertion to defeat the projects of the enemy, and secure our own national independence and honour. The affirmative of this proposition has been uniformly admitted and openly avowed: unless, therefore, the house, influenced by what has been advanced in the course of this night's debate, should think proper expressly to retract that opinion, I have a right to take it as the fundamental point that will govern their determination. This is not an opinion hastily adopted, and lightly considered. It is the language which, after full deliberation and inquiry, the house, at the commencement of the session, presented at the foot of the throne. Such, at that time, was their opinion, and the facts on which it was founded have, in the interval which has elapsed, been neither weakened nor denied. So far from any thing having been advanced contrary to this position, in the course of this debate, the right honourable gentleman himself* has unequivocally admitted, that great military and financial exertion is indispensable in the present situation of the country,

* Mr. Fox.

Now having advanced so much, it was natural to expect he would disclose the nature of those exertions, the necessity of which he did not deny; and if he disapproved of the present mode of raising so considerable a part of the supplies within the year, that he would point out how that end might be obtained, by means less objectionable. The question, as now argued by the right honourable gentleman, is, whether, after a delay of six weeks since the first agitation of this subject, and two months since the issue of the negociation, from which period the necessity of the exertions he admits must be dated;—whether, after such a delay, all exertion should not be suspended on the part of the country, till the house should obtain the dismissal of his Majesty's present ministers, a radical parliamentary reform, and a total change of system. Such is the ground, if I followed the right honourable gentleman, and understood him right, on which he wishes the present question to be determined. In his opinion the guilt of the present administration is so enormous, their general and particular misconduct so manifest and great, that all the faculties of government should be suspended till they are removed. Their removal alone, however, will not do, and he has no hopes of security without a radical reform in parliament, and a total change of system; and, unless these latter points are conceded, he professes that he will not take any share in any new administration that may be formed. With a view of persuading the house to pursue these objects, much time and much eloquence have been consumed, to convince them that they had a regular constitutional right to withhold the supplies, till the grievances, of which they might think proper to complain, were redressed. But time and eloquence appear to me to be wholly misemployed. No one that I know of ever doubted of the validity of that doctrine. The true question now is, according to the right honourable gentleman's mode of reasoning, not whether they have a right under the constitution of withholding supplies till grievances were redressed, but whether the house and country look upon those things as grievances which the right honourable gentleman does; and whether they will make such an exercise of

power in the present situation of the country, to obtain a radical parliamentary reform and total change of system, according to his acceptation of those expressions? It becomes, therefore, of great consequence to ascertain what that acceptation is; and if any ambiguity or uncertainty exists from loose and indefinite expressions, the true meaning will be found to arise no less from the colour and complexion of circumstances which accompany, precede, and follow his professions, than logical distinctions and the context of words. Now I wish to put it seriously to the house, whether, notwithstanding the explanations for the first time given this night by the right honourable gentleman of the extent of his meaning in this respect, a very considerable portion of uncertainty, as to their extent, does not yet remain, and whether all the exertion he himself admits as necessary for the salvation of the country, is to be suspended till objects so general, loose, and indefinite, are obtained? for such is the partial result of all he has now advanced.

But to descend to the few particulars he has mentioned.—A change of ministers, he says, is absolutely necessary before any peace, consistent with the welfare and security of the country, can be expected. Yet how was this attempted to be proved. I do not consider myself much indebted to the right honourable gentleman's candour in admitting, that at least ministers were sincere in the last negociation for peace. No men, in or out of the house, could venture to entertain a doubt of a fact so plain and manifest. The internal evidences of the treaty itself, and every circumstance by which it was attended, sets every suspicion on that subject at defiance. The purity and zeal of ministers throughout the whole of their conduct on that occasion, is established beyond the possibility of doubt. It is not now for me to enter into the discussion how far in 1794 and 1795, France was capable of preserving the relations of peace and amity. Every thing that the right honourable gentleman could urge on this subject, was advanced when the facts of that question were recent, and regularly before the house, which, after full enquiry and deliberation, gave an opinion contrary to that which he

maintained. Every step that ministers have taken, relative to peace, has been submitted to parliamentary discussion, and is fully before the public: and I can assert with confidence, that no man can reflect upon their conduct in that respect, or deny that they have done every thing to obtain peace, short of sacrificing the honour and welfare of the country. According to the right honourable gentleman's own view of the subject, it is a singular mode of reasoning, to threaten ministers with dismissal, that peace might be obtained, because they had not done every thing in their power to obtain it before, though there is no doubt they have since been, and were still disposed so to do. The reasoning is still more curious if followed further. Suppose the measure recommended by the right honourable gentleman were adopted, is it likely that any new administration could succeed in negociation with the enemy, after a considerable suspension of exertion and comparative weakness, when the present administration, backed with the whole strength of the country, and having done every thing consistent with their duty to oppose the wrath of the enemy, had failed? Who will undertake that, in case of an appointment of a new administration, by means at least injurious to our strength, the enemy will be inclined to give terms of peace which they denied to the present ministers, when their conduct was admitted by all to be such, as this new administration could alone adopt? What ground of probability is there to expect such an event? But if the right honourable gentleman's argument has any weight, it is at best ill-timed at present, and should have been argued two months ago, on the first termination of the treaty.

The right honourable gentleman has attempted to draw a distinction between the responsibility of those in office, and those who are not so. In this, however, I do not see any marks of that impartiality which should equally guide both the one and the other. He seems to think, that, while he has a perfect right to arraign the conduct of public men in office, he, being a private member of parliament, is not answerable to any account. I certainly know of no sanction that any man in office has, that should

exempt him from animadversion on his conduct ; and as little am I acquainted with any exemption that private gentlemen may have from reprehension, when their conduct is such as to deserve it : justice, prudence, and expediency, as little exempt the one as the other. I therefore cannot but behold the right honourable gentleman as amenable in his conduct as any other person, whether I consider his character, in relation to domestic concerns at home, or the situation of the enemy abroad. With specious professions of humility, he has doubtless declared himself a simple individual, and expressed a determination to abstain from the risk and fatigue of public office. But what does this amount to ? It is not certain that, thinking as many around him do, the country can be saved by him alone. Thinking so, I say, if a change of administration should take place, will they not feel themselves bound to overcome his scruples, and insist, as a matter of public duty, that he should take upon him the burden of office ? Nay, I put it to them, whether they would not consider it as the pride and glory of their lives, by any means in their power, to place him in the situation to which they think his talents entitle him ? and if they think so, they will, in so doing do no more than what, according to their view of the subject, is right, and highly laudable in them to effect. Nevertheless those who might differ from them in that opinion, and, though admitting the brilliancy and extent of the right honourable gentleman's talents, think that the practical application of them is not conducive to the welfare of the country — such persons must be allowed to look to that event with repugnance and alarm. Upon this subject I have no hesitation of declaring, that were I obliged to plead guilty to every other charge against my colleagues and myself, or from any motive should wish to relinquish my present station, yet, while I wish such a peace as is consistent with the security and welfare of this kingdom, I should feel it as a bounden and over-ruling duty, if the right honourable gentleman had any chance of succeeding me, to remain in office at any risk, and with every sacrifice, in order to prevent an effect so fatal and ruinous to the safety and consequence of this country, as the

gratification of the wishes of him and his friends. I have yet to learn what is the nature of that confidence, which the enemy are to have in an administration supported by that right honourable gentleman. I have on a former occasion said, that I do not envy those whose boast it is that they stand high in the confidence of the enemy. It is maintained, that in case of a change of administration, the house and the country would have the most unlimited confidence as to the sincerity of the negociation for peace, and if it could not be obtained on terms adequate to a just and reasonable expectation, that in such a case the war would be continued with incalculable advantage. Will those who think in this way, attempt to deny that the right honourable gentleman and all his friends have uniformly, since the commencement of the war, maintained the cause of the enemy, at least so far as to contend that they acted on the defensive, and retained a right of inflicting vengeance, and that we were the aggressors? Throughout the whole course of the war they have asserted the justice of the enemy's cause and the insufficiency of our resources. How, in case of such men succeeding to offices, terms favourable or just to this country are to be expected, or how, if the war is to be continued, the enemy are to be convinced of the energy of the kingdom and the permanency of our means, I leave, with no doubt of its decision, to the prudence of the house.

The next point of attack against his Majesty's ministers is their general misconduct in respect to general constitutional doctrines; and then, that they are bad financial ministers, and incompetent to preserve the combination, which, as to the prosecution of the war, they had so much relied upon. These points, I must observe, which are wholly irrelevant to the present question, have repeatedly been discussed and decided in this house, and may be decided again after this is determined, as they have been before. These I do not in the least consider myself bound to enter into at present, and if I did, the decision, either one way or the other, would not affect this bill. Upon these subjects, however, it is obvious that the strength of the right honourable gentleman's arguments lay in this: he says, you, the

administration of the country, are incompetent and ignorant; you rely on foreign alliances; these alliances desert you. You grant subsidies, you guarantee loans; we told you this would not secure you allies. You are fools, and we are wise. This I believe is not a weak summary of his charge against those he is inclined to condemn in every act, and impeach the motives when he cannot deny the effect. I ask, however, and put to the recollection of the house, whether those loans, subsidies, and alliances, were ever maintained on any such principle as that it was impossible to be deceived. In the nature of the thing, no independent state can have security against another, from want of foresight and prudence. It is no imputation against our ally, that another might not see so acutely its own true permanent interest and safety. In the case of our acting with greater wisdom and resolution than others, we are not to let our regret at their misconduct over-rule our own satisfaction in our own prudence and sagacity. Even to this very moment I do not regret those loans, subsidies, and alliances, of which the right honourable gentleman complains. They were entered into with correct views of the real and permanent interest of the country; and though I could have wished that other powers had had a true sense of their own interest; yet as a matter of policy, I do not regret the advantage we derived even at the expense at which it was purchased.

When it is considered that the conduct of ministers with respect to peace, was such as those who wish for a change themselves approve, it is pretty certain that the real cause for their retirement is not that which is ostensibly assigned; but whether the motives be real or pretended, it can be no reason for postponing the present bill, as whether the present administration continue, or yield their places to others, this bill, as a measure essential to the security of the country from the menaces and designs of a rancorous enemy, would be equally expedient and necessary. Suppose the right honourable gentleman was at the head of a new formed administration, would he tell the house that he would expect any success in his treaty, should the na-

tion disarm, or be unprovided to continue the contest with vigour and effect? Were he minister, the same exertion would be necessary, the same question would revert, whether it was expedient to raise seven of the nineteen millions within the year. Is it therefore fair, or generous, or manly, to hear the possibility of a change assigned as a cause for delaying a measure, which, under every administration, would be equally necessary, and must be equally made the subject of discussion? There must be some secret motive for this sudden exertion of the right honourable gentleman. It was most probably to take advantage of what he supposed the public opinion, that he thus appeared again in embattled phalanx, and left the hidden path of secret warfare. With what other view would he otherwise bring into such a debate all the inflammatory topics he has urged, and in a speech of three or four hours, though attending, as he says, by the express commands of his constituents, scarce touch on the subject which he avowedly came forward to discuss? Instead of watching the details and particular bearings of this bill, he adverts only to its principle in the most general terms, and did not even attend in that stage in which alone, by means of regulations, he could alleviate those hardships of which his constituents complain. Far from observing the instructions he professed to obey, he enters into the most foreign and dissuasive questions concerning the origin and conduct of the war, in which as usual he decides in favour of France, and against this country, and in favour of himself and his party, against the ministers in whom his Majesty thought proper to confide. He wishes to impose on the house the condition of putting off the discussion of the bill he was sent here to discuss, in order to enforce that radical reform of parliament and total change of system, of which his constituents in their instructions said nothing, and which if he thought it his duty to urge, he should have felt himself bound to attend for that purpose, without waiting for those injunctions which were the occasion of his presence.

I for one should be glad to have a clear idea of what the right honourable gentleman means by this species of reform and

change. He has on former occasions expressed the same wishes, but yet in a way more general. In the course of what he has said on this subject to night, we have at least the satisfaction of learning that he looks only to these changes through the organ of parliament, which however he expects will not be effected by the power of his eloquence or the force of his reasoning within, but by the influence of the public mind from without. The precise plan of parliamentary reform of which he is the advocate, is now for the first time disclosed, namely, that brought forward last session by another honourable friend of his, not now in his place*. Thus for a plan of parliamentary reform, which the house had already discussed and rejected, and for other particular reformati^ons, on which neither his constituents nor the public had expressed any opinion at all, he wished the house to suspend and hang up all the means of public defence, in a crisis of unexampled danger and difficulty. This mode of obtaining his objects is certainly less mild and regular than the one he professed himself attached to, and recommended with respect to parliamentary reform; for it tends to this—suspend your exertions, let the enemy come and make this change of system and reform the price of self-defence;—an expedient at least hazardous and rash under the present circumstances of the country. If, to avoid this inference, the right honourable gentleman should contend, that, by the influence of the public mind, he means the operation of the fair rational sense of the public mind on their representatives only, then he must admit that he has at last found something more sympathetic between the people and their representatives than he thinks it possible to discover in some views of the subject he occasionally takes, a consistent ground of virtual and effective representation, even in the present form of parliament. If he means neither of these, but something else different from both, but which he does not think it fit and prudent at this moment explicitly to state, his views are then evidently open to the objection, on the ground of ambiguity and in-

* Mr. Grey.

distinctness, which an honourable friend of mine* has said occasioned diffidence and alarm.

The right honourable gentleman has thought proper, on this, and several other occasions, to quote some words used by me in reference to this subject. It is impossible to recollect particular words used so long ago; but I frankly admit that my views of parliamentary reform were favourable to that object, and that I, on all occasions, expressed my opinion with all the warmth of expression I could use: these however must in common candour be understood in reference to that object as at that time understood, and not as to the change of meaning that expression has undergone in later times. He has done me the justice to say, that he believes it was not I who declared "that no good government could subsist, nor bad one be opposed with safety, without parliamentary reform." But whatever words I may have used, or to whatever doctrines I may have subscribed, they must be understood in reference only to the ideas of parliamentary reform then entertained, and I solemnly declare that whatever I may have said or done on that subject, had no relation to the present prevailing systems of reformation, or any principle on which they are founded. My ideas then were as different from those systems then, as my language is now. I always, as is well known to the right honourable gentleman, opposed every plan of universal suffrage and individual representation. All the words I then used, all the measures I then abetted, must be considered as bearing a relation to the ideas and views of things then entertained. By the same rate the right honourable gentleman must now be judged; the words he uses will be understood, unless otherwise restricted, by the ideas and views of things now received; and surely he cannot deny that the expressions he has this night made use of to signify his wishes, constitute the watch-words of a party out of doors, whose real meaning is well understood, and admits of no doubt. Is it not known that they couple their ideas with his words, and hail him as a convert to their

* Mr. Wilberforce.

system, and a champion in their cause? If indeed the right honourable gentleman does mean something in a more limited and rational sense, sure I am, he must be thankful for that scrupulous vigilance and alarm that wishes to distinguish his views of a radical reform in parliament from those entertained by the corresponding society, expressing himself, as he accidentally does, in precisely the same words which that body has thought proper to adopt. It happens, however, that there is a further coincidence subsisting between that body and the right honourable gentleman than mere words. He has not only, they seem to think, exalted, like them, the representative government, but looks with a jealous eye to nobility and hereditary honours; in short, disclaims every principle of government but the representative species. This, I believe, is well known to be their opinion of him, though undoubtedly he will contend that they misconceive the meaning of his words, and that they do not imply the object they suppose. Whatever may be his meaning on other points, he has now, however, fully explained the views he entertains of parliamentary reform; and I must declare that I would forego for ever all prospect of reform, rather than incur the risk of such an one as he wishes, by his own confession, may take place. What is it he contends for? No less than that the whole elective franchise should be taken from those in whom it has long resided, and transferred to all the householders in the kingdom. This is the preliminary, not only to all supply and exertion, but to other changes hitherto unlimited by any designation of their objects. After concealing his opinion for fourteen years, as to the specific plan of reform, it now appears no less than a total change of the old system of election, and a substitute that will at once demolish all the benefits connected with it. In short he would take from the old electors all their rights, and invest them without reserve in new.

The right honourable gentleman has further expressed as a general principle, that he wishes to repress increasing power, and encourage protecting liberty. In the first place, I wish to know what he means by these terms. I here remark the same uncer-

tainty and ambiguity that appear in most of his professions, and which occasion no groundless degree of distrust and alarm in those who do not enter so readily into his views as others immediately around him. I wish to know what is this increasing power he wishes to reprobate, and what this protecting liberty he means to encourage? In another part of his speech he says, that the authority of parliament, ought to be such as it was before the American war. Here also I am at a loss to reach the meaning of his words. I know of no liberty then possessed that is not now equally enjoyed. On professions so loose and indefinite, it would be absurd to rely; unless they are circumscribed by distinct meaning, they never can be adopted as a safe and rational ground of action.

Another commentator on the acts of government* has, in addition to the charges advanced by the right honourable gentleman, insisted, that an end shall be put to the possibility of making a breach in the appropriation act. This charge is not now for the first time brought forward. It was fully and regularly discussed on a former occasion, when first advanced; and how did it turn out?—that the appropriation act had not been violated, but that, under particular circumstances, the form had been departed from to preserve its spirit. The same may be observed with respect to the charges advanced relative to barracks, and the laws concerning persons sent out of the kingdom; the right of assembling, petitioning, and all the other instances advanced as matters of criminal charges against the administration of government by his Majesty's present ministers, which at this late hour it will hardly be expected that I have strength sufficient minutely to examine and answer. The sum total of these objections amounts to this—that the house should at once repeal all those wise precautions and measures which, after an anxious view to the particular circumstances of the times, and an adequate discussion of each particular, they had thought proper to enact, not only with the consent of a vast majority of their own

* Mr. Sheridan,

body, but with that of at least nine-tenths of the people out of doors. Is the house and country prepared for such sacrifices, such sweeping preliminaries?

The honourable gentleman objects also to the conduct of ministers with respect to peerages. Here, too, he is, as usual, general and indistinct. What is it he means? Does he intend to say the prerogative of the crown to create peers should be extinguished? How does he limit his objections? What exceptions are they that he makes? Does he mean that no vacancies should be filled up, that he may supply large arrears when he comes into power, in the way formerly used, when, as he says, "peerage was given as an honour." Till particulars are mentioned, it is impossible to reply to such vague charges, which rather impeach the constitution than criminate the ministers. These, however, are the principal allegations, for which it is contended that ministers deserve to be dismissed from their offices, in order that others more competent to forward the national interests should serve the public in their stead.

If we pass the bill, the right honourable gentleman says that we shall not be considered as the representatives of the people, intimating thereby some doubt, at least, that we are not now the substantial and virtual representatives of that body. How does he make that assertion good? Because, he says, large meetings of the people have expressed their disapprobation of the bill; and therefore, if we do not adopt their opinions, he infers we have no sympathy with them, and in no sense whatever can be called their representatives. In the first place, I must observe, that these meetings were only held in the metropolis; that in other parts of the kingdom no disapprobation has been expressed, and that, even in the metropolis itself, the opposition has a good deal subsided since the modifications, which have removed the principal causes of objection. In the next place, I shall never agree that this house, as the representatives of the people, are bound to bend to every partial and unsettled opinion of that body. I mean not to deny that we should give due weight to the influence of public opinion; but it never was

the principle of the constitution, that the representatives of the people should shift with every breath of popular desire. Nothing could be more inconsistent with true wisdom and public utility, than that the legislators should be influenced by every fleeting and partial expression of the public will. How easy was it in the present case, by misrepresentation, and an imperfect view of the bill in its operation, to raise in the first instance a popular clamour against it! A general disinclination towards it appeared in the public meetings within the metropolis; but no sooner was the subject fully understood, and its particular hardships removed, than it was regarded in a very different light, as appeared by the proceedings of the common-hall in the city, and other parts. The gentlemen opposite to me are ready enough, on all occasions, not only to condemn the conduct of his Majesty's ministers, but also to make the public a party to their cause. I have not only a right to consider them as prejudiced in this respect, but, from frequent experience, erroneous also; for in many cases where they have as loudly maintained the public opinion was with them, on a fair enquiry, where occasion offered, we have found the fact to be directly the reverse. Is it in the nature of things, that a heavy and general tax can, in the first instance, be popular? And, on the contrary, it ever must be the easiest of all things, by artifice and misrepresentation, to raise a clamour against any such measure on its first breaking upon the public mind. It is hardly possible for such a tax to be popular and cheerfully received. All taxes are necessarily hardships, and must be submitted to, not from pleasure, but a sense of public duty: and I hope with confidence that this tax will be so received by the good sense and fortitude of the people; and that, when it comes to be explained and amended, they will submit to the sacrifices it enjoins, as a measure of urgent necessity, under circumstances of the most severe trial that this nation ever experienced. It does not, however, enter into my ideas of public duty, that the legislature should consult the popular opinion at the expense of public safety,

There was one part of the right honourable gentleman's speech that I am impelled to notice, from the extraordinary request it contained. He admitted the great use of unanimity, and allowed, that in this critical period in particular it was highly desirable. The mode, however, in which he means to obtain it is, in my opinion, somewhat singular. He says, we the minority conceiving ourselves right, will not yield to you, the majority, but, as unanimity is desirable, you should undoubtedly come over to our opinion. So that the majority are thus called upon at once to forego their opinions, though adopted after long and frequent debate, and to tread back all their steps, and admit themselves to be wrong, although they knew themselves to be right! This was the reasonable request his arguments conveyed; and we were told that a zealous unanimity was to be expected on no other terms. In like manner he requires us to postpone the bill indefinitely, though arising from urgent necessity, and calculated for security and defence, until he shall in his good time return to his parliamentary duty, and, as occasion suits, unfold to our view, for separate discussion, all the parts of that radical change in our system which he projects.

As to the principles of individual conduct in this house, it is not now a general question of how far a member is authorised to secede from his attendance; but, in my opinion, that virtual representation, of which the right honourable gentleman is so fond, cannot be more completely violated than by a dereliction of duty, particularly in a moment of imminent danger to the country. And this is doubtless aggravated if it should be done with a view of depreciating the body of which he is a member, and to alienate the affections of the people from it. I can hardly conceive how a man can act in grosser violation of his duty as a member of parliament, than by such a conduct. Much of the fact, in such a case, must be collected from attendant circumstances. I shall not now inquire by what motives those gentlemen acted (Mr. Burke and others), alluded to by the right honourable gentleman, who seceded in the American war; but I

recollect that his own secession was announced after the motion made by an honourable gentleman* for parliamentary reform; and that, in the course of that debate, the right honourable gentleman said, that, unless the measures were adopted, the house would not be any longer intitled to the respect of the people out of doors. As to the general principle, nothing can be more certain than that it is a violation of duty to desert a post committed to one's charge, and that it increases, in exact proportion to the danger of those for whom we undertake the charge. Now it did so happen, that the right honourable gentleman could not, in his whole political career, have chosen a moment of secession more encompassed with danger than the one in which he actually did secede. The motive, therefore, is at best suspicious, and declining to attend under such circumstances led at least to inquiry, whether by keeping away he sought opportunities to effect that, by inflaming the people without these walls, which no exertion of his talents could achieve within. He retired just as the rancour of our enemy became most inveterate, and exclusively directed to this country, and when the manifestation of their malice called forth the spirit and zeal of all classes to support our national independence and honour. Just at this juncture it was that the right honourable gentleman thought proper to retire.

On what ground is it that gentlemen oppose this bill? Do they deny the danger that surrounds us? Do they maintain that exertion is not necessary? that it can be suspended with safety? No; they do not attempt to do either; but, as the means of obtaining their own objects, they are willing to risk the honour, welfare, and existence of the country. The right honourable gentleman had asserted his right to secede on his own motives of expediency, and, of course, those who surround him will not object if I take their justification on the same principle; but the right honourable gentleman, it seems, retains his opinion of that expediency, and only now appears at the particular injunction of his constituents to defend their local interest. How comes it, then, that he appears so surrounded

* Mr. Grey.

with friends, who, adopting his principle of secession, have not, in the desire of their constituents, the same motive for his particular exception? Can any thing shew in a stronger light the blind acquiescence of party zeal, when, in defiance of every avowed principle of their public conduct, they now attend to add to the splendour of their leader's entry?

There is one point in the constitution of this country, in which difference of opinion arises, namely, concerning the instructions of constituents to their representatives. Some think themselves bound to obey them, whatever their individual opinion may be on the subject. Others thinking those instructions intitled to their respect, yet follow the dictates of their own consciences. Of this latter class the right honourable gentleman professes himself to be. According, therefore, to his own admission, he now attends in spite of his own opinion of the expediency of secession, to discuss the local interest of his constituents. He, nevertheless, declined attending in that stage of the bill in which alone he could be of service in that particular, by proposing reliefs for the particular hardships his constituents might sustain; and now, without noticing the modifications made, he objects to other particulars, without suggesting or moving any remedy! He came here to oppose its local and partial effect, yet indulges only in a general and indiscriminate opposition to it; and professing to come for the express purpose of discussing this bill, he introduces every topic that has been decided during the long period of his absence! The house must therefore decide in what spirit, and for what real purpose he now appears. Nothing that he has said can be understood as touching in any degree the question now before us. He may, indeed, be said to reproach his Majesty's ministers, but can with no propriety be said to speak to the subject for which his constituents directed him to attend.

With respect to many objections urged in the course of the debate, I must say, in general, that if gentlemen had attended in the proper stage of the bill, they would have heard them answered. It is not that the objections are unanswerable, but they

have not heard the answers that have been given, by neglecting to attend when it was their duty to be present. Upon the question of a great and unusual exertion, no doubt is made; all agree that is indispensable. Now, if this is to be made, the next inquiry is, in what manner is it to be done? From whence arises this secondary question, whether it is to be done in the usual mode of raising supplies, or by raising a considerable proportion of the sum requisite for the current services within the year? Upon this latter question the right honourable gentleman is dubious; his honourable friend* thinks that a sum should be raised by a great exertion within the year. There is one objection to the present plan not easy to comprehend, namely, that by this mode of exertion I only relieve the stocks so as to affect a few particular friends of ministers; for the old stockholders, who bought in before the war, it is said, cannot be hurt, inasmuch as they manifest an intention of retaining their capital and receive the same interest; therefore no depreciation of the funds can affect them. This, however, is a very fallacious and defective view of the subject; for property, the nature of which is transferable, must always depend on the value of that transfer? Is it nothing to prevent the depreciation of 200,000,000*l.* in capital, or can that be said to affect only a few particular friends of a minister? If further loans are to be made for the public service, is it of no consequence whether the funds are at 40 or 48 per cent? Does it make no difference whether money is borrowed for the public at 4, 5, or 6 per cent? Has the price of stocks no effect on commerce and agriculture, if they fall below a certain point? According to this plan, it is not property that is directly taxed, but expenditure is made the criterion of income in its application. I admit that some inequalities will be found; but so there must in every plan of raising a considerable sum within the year, and this only forms an objection to the plan in case it can be shewn that the same sum can be raised by means less partial and irregular. There have been instances of large sums raised within the year, but

* Mr. Sheridan.

in no instance by means less liable to the objection of irregularity.

On the whole, the house will decide whether they will, under the present circumstances of the country, make a great and unusual exertion to resist the enemy, or whether, on the arguments they have heard, they will suspend all defensive precautions, and leave the country open to the ruinous projects of an insolent and overbearing enemy. Notwithstanding the right honourable gentleman has intimated his intention to persevere in his retirement, I leave this question to the house, in full confidence that they will decide on this, and on every other occasion, in such a way as most effectually to support the independence and permanent interest of the country.

The House divided, and the question for the third reading of the bill passed in the affirmative ;

Ayes 196

Noes 71

March 27, 1798.

MR. DUNDAS, in pursuance of a former notice, this day moved, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to enable his Majesty more effectually to provide for the security and defence of these realms ; and to indemnify persons who may suffer injury in their property by the operation of such measures."

MR. PITT rose in reply to various speakers who had preceded him in the debate :—

Sir, I feel myself called upon to express my astonishment at the language thrown out to night by the honourable gentleman* on the other side of the house against my honourable friend † near me. I have no difficulty in saying, that it is the most unprovoked and unwarrantable attack I have ever heard made by one gentleman upon another. With respect to myself, I can easily account for what my honourable friend has said : the sentiments which he has expressed have been unquestionably dictated by

* Mr Tierney.

† Mr. Wilberforce.

the purest and most patriotic motives. He expressed his belief, that the great body of the people of this country were impatient to step forward, and carry into execution those plans which the wisdom of the legislature might adopt for the more effectual protection and safety of the kingdom; and on that ground he was desirous that any salutary plans or systems of defence, which might be proposed, should be received with unanimity, and confirmed with the most marked and decided approbation of every member, for, in that most essential point, all are equally concerned. It is therefore rather extraordinary, because my honourable friend complained that certain members did not give their hearty support to the measures proposed to be carried into execution, with respect to the defence of the country, that the honourable gentleman on the other side of the house should get up and make a direct and violent attack against my honourable friend, as if the honourable gentleman was convinced that the insinuation had been thrown out against himself. What it is that has so unexpectedly kindled the flame of resentment in the honourable gentleman's breast, and raised his passions to this aggression, I am at a loss to conjecture: but I must ask, has my honourable friend had no cause for throwing out any blame against certain persons this day? Has he been furnished with no ground for delivering his sentiments in the way which he has thought proper to adopt?

The honourable general* has certainly not been so warm in the important cause of the defence of the country as my honourable friend, and, I am confident, many others may have wished: for though he has not objected to the plan now under discussion, one may, with great consistency, suppose, that his opinion in favour of it is too lukewarm. The honourable general has said, that the operation of the plan ought to be delayed, and that has been considered as a just sentiment by one who expressed his conviction that it ought not to be delayed at all. With respect to the honourable general's opinion as to the exact manner of

* General Tarleton.

defending the country, or that the force of the kingdom should be collected and applied to the protection of the great towns, I will not undertake to discuss that point at present; but if he seriously entertains that opinion, it clearly forms in my mind an additional argument why we should be more eager and more sanguine in the adoption of the plan, and therefore we cannot be surprised, that my honourable friend has been induced, connecting such sentiments with the nature of the system of defence proposed, to consider him as not sufficiently zealous in promoting the measure. The honourable general has alluded to the impracticability of driving away from the coasts the cattle of the farmers. I did not, however, understand from him, that we ought not to drive away the cattle in case of an invasion; but if he meant to say, that it should be done soon, I am the more surprised that he should entertain an opinion of that kind, because from his experience, as a military man, he ought to have known, that a measure of that peculiar nature is always expedient, and even necessary.

As to what has been thrown out by an honourable gentleman* on the subject of conciliation with respect to Ireland, and the reference which he has thought proper to make in his observations on that topic to the present situation of Switzerland, I cannot help remarking, that the allusion is one of the strangest that I have ever heard made; and my honourable friend might have been well surprised at the inference which the honourable gentleman drew from it, because the inference ought, in fact, to be directly the reverse of the conclusion which the honourable gentleman took so much pains to establish. The same honourable gentleman has reprobated, in the most pointed and unqualified terms, the present system of coercion which unfortunately has become necessary for Ireland, and has compared the state of this country with that in which Switzerland has been hitherto placed. He has endeavoured to shew that the want of unanimity among the people of that confederacy, has produced those

* Mr. Nicholls.

misfortunes in which they are at present involved, and has thus laboured to prove that similar calamities impend over this country. But, Sir, the honourable gentleman should know, that the British parliament and the British government, during the whole of his present Majesty's reign, so far as they had the power of interfering in the affairs of Ireland, have shewn every indulgence, and granted every possible favour to that country. He should know, that nothing has been omitted on their part, and that no exertion has been wanting to extend the commerce, and secure the rights, privileges, and happiness of that kingdom.

Conciliation is now become a favourite word ; but I beg leave to say, that the word conciliation, in the present crisis of public affairs, is both misunderstood and misapplied. Does the honourable gentleman mean, by conciliation to Ireland, that we should make every concession and every sacrifice to traitors and rebels, to men who are industriously propagating the most dangerous principles, engrafting upon the minds of the people the most destructive doctrines, wantonly seducing and deluding the ignorant multitude, encouraging the most criminal correspondence with the enemy, exciting the commission of treason in Ireland, under the specious pretence of parliamentary reform, and forming, in conjunction and co-operation with the professed enemy of all liberty, morality, and social happiness, plans for separating that country from Great Britain, and for converting Ireland into a jacobinical republic, under the wing and protection of republican France ? Are we to conciliate men whose machinations go not merely to the subversion of their legitimate government, but to the diffusion of every horror that anarchy can produce ? Are we to conciliate men with arms in their hands, ready to plunge them into the hearts of those who differ from them in political opinion ;—men who are eagerly watching for an opportunity to overturn the whole fabric of their constitution, and to crush their countrymen with its ruins ? Are we to withhold from the peaceable and loyal inhabitants of Ireland that protection without which there is no security for their lives and

property? No! The only measure of safety we can adopt is a vigorous system of opposition to those who would completely destroy the country; while on the other hand, we are irresistibly called upon to give a manly and firm support to those who would preserve for themselves and their posterity those great and inestimable blessings which they now enjoy!

Since an allusion has been made to Switzerland, I think it necessary to observe, that her present calamities have been produced by the adoption of measures directly contrary to those which I have just mentioned. She unfortunately gave way at an early period of the war, to the fatal influence of French democracy. She afterwards consented to new model her government, and endeavoured, but in vain, to appease the enemy. Her condescension was ineffectual—her concessions were disregarded; her attempt at conciliation was fruitless. The enemy was regardless of every concession, and intent alone upon gratifying the imperious calls of unbounded ambition. But if the Swiss had from the beginning pursued a manly and decided line of conduct; if they had opposed vigorous measures to the destructive principles of France, and kept themselves in a state of independence and strict neutrality, they would, I believe, be at this moment as free as any other nation; though I still sincerely hope their resistance is not too late. If, therefore, any inference with respect to the present situation of this country is drawn from the misfortunes of Switzerland, the example of the miseries which she has suffered in consequence of her timidity surely ought to weigh with us; the patriotic heroism and gallant ardour now displayed by her brave inhabitants ought to animate us to the most vigorous exertions, and convince us, since we behold the extraordinary efforts of which a nation is capable, even with all that supineness into which she has been betrayed, and reduced as she is to her last struggle, that we have every thing to hope from our perseverance, firmness, and unanimity. I trust, Sir, that the example of that brave, but unhappy people, will animate this country to vigorous and necessary exertions. Let us not, by imitating their former

conduct, run into the danger in which they have involved themselves, and subject ourselves to incur those misfortunes which they now experience.

Leave was given to bring in the bill; and it was accordingly presented, and ordered to be read a second time the next day.

April 2, 1798.

REDEMPTION OF THE LAND-TAX---The House having resolved itself into a committee of the whole House, Mr. Hobart in the chair,

MR. PITT rose and spoke in substance as follows:

The subject which I am now about to submit to the committee, has of late excited considerable attention, and given rise to considerable inquiry. As the ultimate judgment which the committee will form upon it, must depend upon the consideration of a great variety of details, it is not my intention to call upon you for any decision to-day. I trust, however, that the principle upon which the measure is founded, only requires to be very shortly stated, in order to engage your attention, and to recommend itself to your notice. That, in the present situation of the country, every measure which tends to invigorate public credit, which will facilitate the means of supporting that struggle into which we were driven for our necessary defence, and which has been prolonged by the obstinate ambition of the enemy; that every measure which will furnish fresh resources to animate the courage of the nation, and to enable us to maintain that character which Englishmen have ever displayed, has a fair claim to the favour of the legislature, I am warranted to pronounce, from the experience of the present session, the unanimity you have shewn upon former occasions, and the recent exertions you have made for the public defence. When I recollect, then, the temper which parliament has uniformly manifested, I am sensible that it is needless to say any thing in recommendation of the principle, provided the measure itself be practicable. The leading object of

the plan which I shall have the honour to propose, is to absorb a great quantity of stock, to transfer a considerable portion of the funded security into landed security, and, by the redemption of the present land-tax, to purchase a quantity of stock more than equivalent to the amount of the tax. That tax will be made applicable in the same manner as at present, but the proportion of stock it will purchase will be one fifth larger, presenting at once a considerable pecuniary gain to the public, and an advantage to the individual by whom the redemption shall be made. The chief recommendation of the plan, however, is, that it will diminish the capital stock, and remove that which presses more severely upon us than any inconvenience with which our situation is attended. It is a truth now universally felt, a truth which the enemy have acknowledged, and which faction itself will not venture to deny, that even in this stage of the war, the state of every part of our trade, our industry, and revenue, is astonishing and proud for this country; that our general capital and wealth is greater than they were even at its commencement; that our commerce, so far from having experienced a diminution as in other wars, has greatly increased; that our industry and manufactures, subject to those local fluctuations which are inseparable from a system so extended and diversified, have sensibly advanced; and that, on a general view, our situation exhibits every symptom of internal wealth, that we are richer, that we possess a greater command of capital than this country ever enjoyed at any former period. It is singular too, that under the depreciation which the funds have experienced, the price of land has maintained itself above the average of former wars, and equal to the price in times of peace; very little indeed below the unexampled state of a few years preceding the war.

I am aware that no argument is required to demonstrate the necessity of great exertion in the circumstances in which we are now placed. You have already expressed your opinion of that necessity, and have shewn your readiness to employ our resources. All then that is wanting is judgment and discrimination in the mode of calling them into action. If there be any

chance of diminishing the capital of the funded debt, which is the only pressure by which our efforts are embarrassed, the measure, by which it is to be effected, is founded upon clear and substantial principles of policy. This is a principle upon which the house has acted in the course of the present session. Upon this principle you felt the expediency of making an extraordinary exertion to raise, within the year, a considerable part of the supplies. It is a further satisfaction for us to know, that the energy of the measure has been fully proved; that though difficult in detail, though encountered by considerable opposition on its appearance, and many obstacles in its progress, its advantages have been recognised by the country. Though necessary to qualify it by many modifications, which diminished the full effect it was intended to have, yet the voluntary zeal of the country has borne testimony to the principle; and the contributions with which the patriotism of individuals has come forward for the public defence, furnishes the best proof, that in this measure, the legislature was in unison with the sentiments of the people. From what I have heard, the objection to the measure of increasing the assessed taxes has been, that it did not go far enough; and commercial men have declared, that it did not embrace sufficiently that species of property of which they are possessed. Whatever may be the decision of the house, as to the principle of the plan which I am about to propose, I am sure that any measures which tend to give effect to the same object, which will combine an annual saving with other collateral advantages, which, without imposing any new burdens upon the public, will be attended with considerable benefit to the nation as well as individuals, cannot fail to be received with the highest favour by this house, and to secure the approbation of the country.

In stating the principle upon which the plan proceeds, I am aware that I have claimed a great deal of merit to the measure: in this, however, I claim none from the proposal. The principle itself possesses that recommendation which usually belongs to good principles, that it is so simple that the advantages which

are produced by its effects do not necessarily suppose a great share of merit in the proposer.

The amount of the present land-tax is about 2,000,000*l*. This sum has been annually granted by parliament for a century past, and has been levied at the same rate in different districts. The repartition which was originally made has continued so long, and the sum of 4*s*. in the pound for so considerable a period has never been exceeded, that it will be readily acknowledged that this sum ought not to be diminished, at least till many other burdens which weigh more heavily upon the public have been taken off. Taking this state then as that upon which the present land-tax is raised, it is proposed, by changing the security of a part of the funded capital into landed security, to cover the two millions of existing land-tax by two millions four hundred thousand of dividends. By this measure it is evident that, upon the supposition that the whole of the land-tax were to be redeemed, the public would gain 400,000*l*. The terms upon which the purchase is intended to be made, while they produce this benefit to the public, will present that advantage to the land owners, which will render it eligible for them to redeem, and tempt them to give full effect to the measure. Eighty millions would thus be taken out of the market, and the public credit, relieved by so great a pressure, would be proportionably strengthened. Having stated this brief outline, I shall advert to a few of the objections against the measure, which have yet come to my knowledge.

It is obvious that the first step necessarily involved in the measure is to render the present land-tax perpetual, universally redeemable, and, where not redeemed, always subject to redemption according to certain regulations. There is one objection which at once suggests itself, and to which a very satisfactory answer occurs. I mean the objection that may be made on constitutional grounds. It may be said that, to render a grant which is now annual, perpetual, is to remove the constitutional checks of parliament over the public expense, and to render perpetual what is now voted as an annual supply. I do not deny

that the adoption of the present measure would create some alteration, but the objection upon the constitutional ground is very easily removed. Nothing can be more easy than to place under the annual controul of parliament funds that are at present permanent, equivalent to those which are taken away by this measure. Certain branches of the consolidated fund may be made annual, even to a greater amount than two millions of land-tax. This would answer every purpose of constitutional controul. Ministers would not then have it in their power to apply money without consent of parliament more than before. It is my intention, therefore, to move a particular resolution to obviate this objection. Such funds as parliament may judge most expedient for the purpose of controul may be selected and submitted to annual vote in the same manner as the land-tax, and instead of two millions, the sum may be augmented to the full amount of the dividends which will be taken out of the market. Parliament will thus have the annual controul of 2,400,000*l*. By this means it will so happen that the constitutional check of this house will for some years be more, and never will be less, than it was before.

Another objection urged by some is, that from the present repartition to perpetuate the existing land-tax would be to perpetuate an inequality which is so great as to form no inconsiderable abuse. They say, that if the tax were equalized, they would have no objection to render it perpetual. Let us consider this objection more closely and attentively. Since the revolution, especially during the latter part which has succeeded, it has never been in contemplation to equalize the land-tax by a new repartition according to the real amount of property, and the ability of different districts. We know that in this house, though the vote for the land-tax had the undoubted right to adopt a new repartition, no such proposition was ever made. With the experience of a century before us, then, if we have seen no such attempt ever made, is it more likely that it would be corrected, even were the vote to be annual, than if the grant were made perpetual?

I do not now argue whether it would have been right to revise

the repartition at present established. I am ready to admit that I consider it to have been an original defect of the present plan of repartition, that no periodical revision was fixed. I think that it would have been wise to have made such a provision, and that it would have been happy for the country had it been done. Two important guards would be necessary; to prevent the inequality from being too great, and at the same time not to discourage improvement. That principle, however, not being at first recognised, and property having been since transferred without any attention to it, would it now be wise, just, or popular, to make a new valuation? I think not. If so many years experience has shewn that no inclination to establish a different repartition prevailed, ought we to allow much weight to the objection, that to perpetuate the tax would be to perpetuate the inequality?

I have likewise heard, that it has been objected that this very measure would tend to introduce an equal repartition. It ought not to be expected that these opposite objections will come from the same quarter, and that a grievance will be felt both ways. It does happen, however, that the same mind embraces opposite and contradictory objections. Those who are determined to object to every thing, may continue to bring forward in a regular opposition arguments against a measure which do not proceed upon the same principle. On the present occasion, however, I do not expect that this mode of attack will be employed; at least I do not anticipate such a mode of opposition from any of those I now see before me. The question, then, is, does the present measure give any new facility for the introduction of a general land-tax? If the measure did give any new facility for employing the substantial resources of the country, and deriving additional means of strength without distressing the people, I should be more disposed to claim it as a recommendation, than to consider it as a defect. In times like the present, whatever supplies us with the means of calling into action the real resources of the country, and giving new energy to the contest we maintain, would deserve the cordial support of every man who is a friend to the happiness and prosperity of the country, and in a particu-

lar manner of those who would be the greatest sufferers, if the hostile designs of the enemy were to succeed.

The measure to be proposed to you, however, possesses no such recommendation. It leaves the question of a more equal repartition of the land-tax precisely where it found it. Parliament now has the undoubted right to raise more than four shillings in the pound on the land; and what greater authority would it acquire were the present redeemed? If the whole were to be redeemed, for it would be sanguine to suppose that the whole will be redeemed within a few years by the owners, the only thing necessary to be provided as expressly as any legislative provision can guard, is, that if ever a new land-tax is imposed, it shall not be imposed upon those who have redeemed in any different proportion from that on those who have not redeemed. It would be necessary to provide that the amount of what may have been redeemed should be deducted from any new impost. It appears to me that such a provision would secure those who shall take the benefit of redemption as much from any additional charge in future on that account, as those who had not bought up their land-tax at all. This, then, appears a sufficient answer to the general objections which have been suggested against the measure. As to the various details which it embraces, it would be idle to enter into any minute discussion of them, till the committee has had further time to take them into mature consideration.

There is one objection, however, which is partly connected with the detail of the measure, and partly applies as a general objection. This regards the option to be given in the second instance to become a purchaser of the tax, provided the owner himself should be unwilling or unable to buy. Cases may occur in which the proprietor finds it inconvenient to make the advances necessary for the redemption. Great pains, however, have been taken to lighten this inconvenience. Every attention has been paid to give the landholder all the advantages consistent with the ultimate success of the scheme. It is of infinite importance to gain during the war every benefit which the measure is calculated to afford; it is of the utmost impor-

tance to secure that assistance to credit, which will supply us with the means of that resistance which our independence, our property, and our happiness calls upon us to make. For this reason the landholder ought to have no unlimited and exclusive privilege in the purchase of his tax, though the terms will be such as to render it highly beneficial for him to become the purchaser himself. To enable him to take the benefit held out to him, every facility will be given him for raising money, and even should he lose the first opportunity of purchase, the redemption of the tax will not be hopeless. A period should be fixed at which he shall have the liberty to redeem, though, on his refusal, a third party in the first instance has become the purchaser.

Such are the views upon which the plan is founded. As to the terms upon which the purchase is to be made, I shall explain them very shortly. Payment of the redemption will not be demanded in money, but will be received in transfer of stock to the commissioners for liquidating the national debt. This mode has the advantage of accommodating itself to the fluctuation of stock, and each transaction liquidates itself. The present price of three per cents. being about 50, affords an interest to purchasers of six per cent. At this rate stock sells at from 16 to 17 years' purchase, and the tax will be sold at 20 years' purchase. Every pound of annual tax, therefore, will be equal to 40% capital stock. Should stocks rise to 75 the purchase will be 30 years, and the rate of purchase will thus vary one year with every variation of two and a half per cent. in the price of stock. From this statement of the comparative purchase of the stock and tax, it is evident that the public gains one-fifth of the purchase by the transfer of stock.

As far as the landholder is concerned, the question then is, whether 20 years' purchase will present a sufficient inducement to redeem, and whether 20 years be a sufficient advantage for what he parts with at 17 years' purchase. This rests wholly upon the supposed difference between landed and funded security. Landed property in general throughout the kingdom sells at from 23 to 30 years' purchase; funded at present from 16 to 17. We are giving landed security for funded, and at the rate of

20 years' purchase. At this rate the share of advantage to the public is small, to the individual it is very considerable, if the advantage purchased is considered of the same description as landed property. I do not say, however, that it is exactly of the same description as landed property; they are to be distinguished by their respective advantages and disadvantages. The benefit to the purchaser by redemption is less valuable than landed property in this respect; it is dry and unimprovable possession. Land, however, is improvable, and it sells not only on its present value, but on the calculation of progressive improvement and speculative advantage. Other temptations to the purchase of land are command, influence, amusement, pleasure, occupation, according to the temper and disposition of the purchaser. It cannot be said, however, that the purchase of this benefit is rendered more valuable by any of these advantages. It should be recollected at the same time, that the purchase of the tax, if not absolutely the acquisition of enjoyment—if not a freedom from vexation, is freedom from something which a man would wish to be without. It has this advantage too, that if not susceptible of improvement, it is attended with no risk. The purchaser is exempted from the care of management and the trouble of collection, and taking all the advantages and disadvantages together, it may be considered as a purchase of a very desirable nature. While the owner is thus induced to become the purchaser, the public, as we have seen, derives a very considerable benefit from the transaction.

The next part of the plan is to give a facility to the possessor of land also to become a purchaser. For this purpose it is intended to give the tenant for life or in tail, the same power to raise the money by burdening the property as proprietor in fee, provided, however, that the money so raised shall be strictly applied to the purchase of the tax. It is even intended to allow them to give a rent charge upon the property to the amount if convenient, to increase the facility of the possessor becoming the purchaser. It is likewise proposed to give the proprietors of settled estates power to sell such a portion of the estate as shall

enable them to pay off the purchase of the tax, providing that the money shall be strictly applied for that purpose.

Giving these facilities to the possessor to become the purchaser in the first instance, it appears necessary to fix a certain period, after which, if they decline, third parties may buy. To these the terms shall be the same as to the owners. Landholders, however, are to have this superior advantage, that five years shall be allowed for the payment of the instalments. At the same time, however, if they shall avail themselves of this indulgence, they shall pay interest on the instalments, in order to compensate to the public for the non-extinction at this period of the purchase. Purchasers, not owners, are to pay up their instalments within one year.

It is necessary, therefore, in order to call the means of resource thus furnished into action, to take third parties where the landlords decline. That the situation of such third parties may not be too precarious, and that they may not be too easily divested of the property they have acquired, some provisions must be adopted by which they may be secured, and at the same time the power of redemption preserved to the original owner. It is difficult exactly to say what medium will balance the right to be given to these two parties, which will present to the monied men the temptation to buy, and reserve to the owner the power of redemption. The monied man must be induced to purchase by the difference which he supposes to exist between funded and landed property. This difference is greater or less according as the times are critical or tranquil. Land does not vary in time of war in the same proportion as funded property. Those who make a distinction in the value of land, do it upon its being less liable to fluctuation, and not upon any circumstance affecting the permanent value of stock. If then a third person shall purchase, the owner shall not be at liberty to redeem till a period arrives when the monied man shall be willing to return his money into stock, and the landholder shall have the means of raising money for his redemption. This period will be at the happy moment when, having surmounted the difficulties with which we have to struggle, and triumphed

in the contest in which we are engaged, the consolidated fund shall have attained its maximum, and being no longer allowed to accumulate at compound interest, the dividends shall be made applicable by parliament. This will be when the consolidated fund shall be 4,200,000*l*. Supposing then that by the exertions which we have made, and continue to make, we should go through the difficulties we have to encounter, and pass with success through this crisis of our fate, when the public debt shall be met by the consolidated fund there must be an end of all doubt of public credit; there must be an end of all question of national securities, of all distinction between landed and funded property.—That moment, then, when least discouraging for the monied man to revert to the funded security, shall be fixed for the owner to avail himself of that redemption which circumstances had at first made impossible. If not redeemed within a given time, however, it becomes material to render the property permanent with the purchaser, to the exclusion of the owner. Three years, then, after the expiring of the ten years, at the close of which the power of redemption is permitted to the owner, seems to be a fair extension of the privilege. It would give to the owner an opportunity to purchase, of which, from his circumstances, he was unable to avail himself on the first offer.—It will give him time for preparation for domestic arrangements, and for raising the necessary funds. Thus no party will have reason to complain of his situation. Provisions are made to secure to each the advantages which he will be most likely to prefer.

In the transaction the situation of the monied man is precisely this. During a period of difficulty and danger, he has got a landed security instead of that of the funds. This case, however, will require two regulations; first, that if any person, not the owner, has purchased by the transferring of an annuity, he shall be paid the same quantity of stock upon the redemption, which he had transferred without regard to the price of such stock. Thus, supposing he had transferred to the public in payment when stock was at 50, and in the interval it should rise to 75,

he will derive all the advantage from the rise, and may thus realize fifty per cent. upon his capital. At the same time he is to have no risk in case of a depreciation of the funds. Should they fall below 50, he is to be reimbursed to the extent of the difference. The situation of the stockholder who becomes a purchaser of the tax is precisely this, that he is speculating upon a rise without any hazard of loss from depreciation.

I have stated these points to shew the general tendency of the measure. It will now be seen, that it is liable to no general objections which do not admit of a remedy; that the difficulties in the detail are not such as to impede its progress; that the advantage to the public is considerable, and the benefit accruing to the individual such as will render it an object for him to purchase. While the monied man is induced to come forward to assist the state by purchasing the tax, a remedy is reserved to the owner, to enable him, at a fixed period, to repair the disappointment he may have sustained from his original inability.

A variety of details must be involved in a measure like the present, but there are none which appear to be attended with great difficulty. On the present plan of repartition, the amount of particular districts remains unaltered, though it may vary within the district, with the improvement or decline of the various parts. In the metropolis and considerable towns this is particularly the case. In the parish of Mary-la-bonne the extensive improvement has rendered the repartition lighter, while in other districts it may become heavier from an opposite cause. Provision, therefore, must be made for the situation of an owner purchasing in the different cases of increase or decline.

The most advisable regulation certainly would be, that of leaving it to the option of the owner, whether he will redeem it at the present price that shall be offered to him, or take it according to any future assessment to which it may be subject; the augmentation on which, as it is intended to be proportioned to the present local inequalities in the land-tax, will nearly produce the same effect as if that impracticable plan of a general equalization was to be adopted. But in case of a third person purchasing a part

of this tax, he shall be entitled to receive an abatement proportioned to the fund which he may give in exchange for the tax. Therefore it will be extremely material to consider who the purchasers are to be; whether the land-owners, or other persons not having any property in the land; to see what circumstances may belong to particular places, and whether there may not be a great surcharge in some parishes, and none in others. But it is not necessary for me now to enter into those minute circumstances, which may be better discussed when the business shall come before the house for its consideration, and which will be introduced by way of regulation into any bill that may be brought in, if the house shall agree to the resolutions I mean to bring forward. It would also be desirable to allow a person to purchase not only a certain portion of the tax, but a given share of a district.

These are the circumstances of the case which I have to lay before the house, and which I have conveyed in as short a statement as I was able. The object is one which requires consideration. In the first opening of the matter I avoided going into any minute detail; and although I feel it a matter of propriety in the out-line, and such as deserves at least a favourable hearing, yet I wish it to be examined carefully, weighed dispassionately and deliberately, and that parliament may consider, whether it is not such a measure as they ought in their wisdom to adopt at this arduous moment. I shall follow the practice I have observed in other instances with respect to the form of proceeding; that of moving the first resolution, and afterwards all the others in point of form, and then postpone the consideration of the substance of the plan to another day. I should propose taking the opinion of the house upon them on Thursday; and then that the whole subject should go over until after the holidays, in order that gentlemen may take them into the country, and have an opportunity of conversing with their constituents, and learning whether any local circumstance may, in any case, render alteration necessary. I should now, without any farther trouble to the committee,

move the first resolution; but perhaps the committee would wish to hear a statement of the heads of the resolutions.

The first resolution declares that the land-tax should be rendered perpetual, subject to certain modes of restriction, regulation, and redemption.

The second provides for the appointment of commissioners to sell the land-tax upon the terms and at the rate I have already stated.

The third gives power and preference to the owners of land to purchase the land-tax according to the nature of the interest they have in the estate, whether a fee or otherwise, and that in the event of the person in possession declining to purchase, the next in succession, or the person in remainder may do so. And that any third person may make such a purchase for the owner, &c.

The fourth gives power to owners to sell part of their estates, or raise money by way of rent-charge to enable them to purchase the tax.

The fifth gives power to third persons, the owner of the land having declined it for a given period, to purchase the tax.

The sixth describes the mode in which the payment shall be made.

The seventh regulates the power of the collectors in receiving the money.

The eighth limits the time during which the power of redemption shall continue.

The ninth imposes a penalty on those who purchase and do not make good the payment of their instalments.

The tenth provides that if any assessment which shall continue to be charged shall be found to exceed 4s. in the pound on the annual value of the messuages, &c. an abatement shall be made.

The eleventh prescribes in what manner a register shall be kept for entering proceedings under this plan.

The twelfth provides that when the whole land-tax shall be brought up, the assessment shall cease.

The thirteenth transfers the business of the commissioners, appointed to carry into effect the plan for the reduction of the national debt.

The fourteenth provides, that in case any additional land tax should be imposed, it shall not operate heavier on those who have purchased the former tax than on others.

The fifteenth contains an account of the sum of 1,400,000*l.* which it is intended to produce annually.

This is the proper statement of the heads of the resolutions which I propose to be discussed hereafter; but if any gentleman has any thing to offer now, I should be glad to hear him.

After some discussion of the measure, the chairman reported progress, and the committee was ordered to sit again on Wednesday.

April 20, 1798.

A message from his Majesty was brought down by Mr. Secretary Dundas, and read from the chair as follows:

“ GEORGE R.

“ His Majesty thinks it proper to acquaint the House of Commons, that from various advices received by his Majesty, it appears that the preparations for the embarkation of troops and warlike stores, are now carried on with considerable and increasing activity in the ports of France, Flanders, and Holland, with the avowed design of attempting the invasion of his Majesty's dominions, and that in this design the enemy is encouraged by the correspondence and communication of traitorous and disaffected persons and societies of these kingdoms. His Majesty places the firmest reliance, under Divine Providence, on the bravery of his fleets and armies, and on the zeal, public spirit, and unshaken courage of his faithful people, already manifested in the voluntary exertions of all ranks of his Majesty's subjects for the general defence, and more than ever necessary at a moment when they are called upon to contend for the preservation of all that is dear to them.

“ His Majesty, in pursuance of the act passed in the last session of parliament, for raising a provisional force of cavalry, has thought it right to give directions, that the said cavalry should be drawn out and embodied; and it is also his Majesty's intention, to order the part not yet embodied of the aug-

mentation made to the militia, under the acts of last session, to be forthwith drawn out and embodied, in pursuance of his Majesty's communications already made to the House of Commons on this subject.

"His Majesty feels it incumbent on him to make the fullest use of the extensive means already provided by the wisdom of parliament for the national defence. But he feels it at the same time, under circumstances which he has stated, indispensably necessary to recommend it to the House of Commons, to consider without delay of such farther measures as may enable his Majesty to defeat the wicked machinations of disaffected persons within these realms, and to guard against the designs of the enemy, either abroad or at home.

"G. R."

Mr. Dundas then moved an address of thanks to his Majesty in the language of the message, which was seconded by Mr. Pitt.

After Mr. Sheridan had spoken in warm approbation of the address, and in a tone and language calculated to animate the exertions of the country at this important crisis,

MR. PITT rose to reply :

Being so well satisfied with certain parts of the speech of the honourable gentleman who has just spoken; admiring, as I do, in common with the rest of the house, the energy, the vigour, the manliness and eloquence, which were displayed in that speech, I should be extremely unwilling to take notice of other parts of it in which we differ; but I beg it to be understood, it is because I do think unanimity valuable upon the present occasion, and at this moment, in this house, that I shall abstain from comments upon parts of that speech, to which I cannot assent. I had much rather express satisfaction at the present opinion of the honourable gentleman, from whatever ground it has arisen, that his opinion has been changed with respect to the conduct, which this country ought to observe with regard to France; I am glad that he now at least agrees with us in the necessity of resisting the arms of France, and in calling on every man to join in that resistance.—I say, I had rather do so than enter into the discussion of other points in which I differ from that honourable gentleman. I will not suffer myself to follow him over many of the various topics which he has introduced to-night. The merit of his disinterestedness I do not mean to de-

tract from, because he has candidly stated, that while he gives his assistance to us in the present crisis, he does not approve of any part of our conduct which he has formerly censured. I therefore receive his aid now, as I am confident he intended it to be received, as a testimony of his public spirit. I am more convinced now than ever that that which now animates the zeal, calls forth the ardour, and occasions the display of the eloquence of that honourable gentleman, is owing to the conduct of France; that which now produces unanimity in this house and in this country is nothing more than a display of those principles, a developement of that character, which belonged originally to the French revolution—an event which, for a while, unfortunately had the countenance of that honourable gentleman, but which was then resisted by the nation at large; a resistance which, if not made earlier than the period of the honourable gentleman's conviction of its propriety, would have been too late: even unanimity itself would then have been useless, and the honourable gentleman would have been left without a place for the display of his abilities in this house. I must also say, that although I do not wish to detract from his talents; although I admire his eloquence, and revere the wisdom of some part of his conduct this night; although I rejoice in the unanimity which we are likely to have upon this occasion, yet it is not to the wisdom, or to the splendid display of talents, or to the animated zeal of an individual, that we are to look for safety; it can only be considered as giving aid to the efforts of millions acting under the clearest necessity. That honourable gentleman, therefore, will not think I should depreciate him, or any other individual, if I said it was adding but little to the efforts of a nation nearly unanimous before; a nation which did not want that honourable gentleman to tell them, they are contending for liberty, for order, for property, for honour, for law, for religion, and even for existence. They would have been happy to have had him contending with them from the commencement of this contest; they would, however, have been able to have gone on without him. While I say this, let

me give that gentleman the praise and thanks that are due to him for setting the example he has done; for, be it recollected, he has set an example of unanimity in this house for opposing the common enemy; let us allow the credit that is due to him; but let us not do such injustice to the zeal and the energy of the country as to doubt, that England was as secure before this unanimity as it is now, and as I trust it will be after it.

On the subject of Ireland, the honourable gentleman says he will make a motion on some future day. I will venture to say, that when that subject comes to be discussed, if Ireland forms now part of the weakness, instead of the strength, of the British empire, it is because those very French principles, the fatal influence of which that honourable gentleman has stated to-night, in a strain of energy and captivating eloquence which I will not weaken by attempting to repeat his words—it is owing, I say, to these French principles, which found their way into that kingdom, where the arts of deception, from various causes, are more easily practised, and are more successful than in this. I will therefore say, that with every desire, with every wish, to see adopted a system of conciliation with Ireland, when that may be practicable, I must tell him, that if he means by a peace with Ireland, peace with those who are devoted to the French, I think that would be as mean a capitulation, as that which he described with respect to our submitting to a foreign yoke: I say, you may as well expect peace with a French army at the gates of London, as peace with the jacobins in Ireland.

If I doubted any thing on the subject of French ambition, which was introduced by that honourable gentleman, it was upon the reserve which he made for treating with the French after an invasion. I know no situation which can justify a nation of freemen under any circumstances, in making a treaty of capitulation, or surrender of liberty and independence to the mercy of the enemy; and it is a sentiment in the heart of every Englishman, a law beyond any statute, that it would be high treason for this country to treat with France, while a single regiment of French forces remained in England. I must apply

the same feelings and the same sentiments with regard to Ireland.

And now, as to the only other point which I intend to notice in the speech of the honourable gentleman, I mean the state of a conspiracy in this country; he has said, that much might be known to government which is not known to him. I know that much is known to government which cannot be known to him upon that subject. I know that the country at large is sensible, that there is a body of men, too considerable in number and activity for government to pass by them unnoticed; men who are going on with the daring purpose of corresponding with the French, for establishing a spirit of republicanism in this country, under the auspices of a foreign force. This is supported by the conduct of our enemies; we can see nothing of the proceedings of our enemies; we can see none of the speeches of their leaders, in which it is not attempted to animate the French people to invade this country; no temptation to make their armies embark; no endeavour to prevail upon their scanty marine to try their feeble efforts, that is not followed up with the hope of success, by the co-operation of traitors in this country. I think, therefore, I may venture to say, that when the crown does state by a message, that the information is received of the existence of such a design, we ought to be prepared in the best manner possible.

When we know that the enemy are forming a plan to invade this country; when we know that in former times, on such communications from the throne, our ancestors, without investigation, had recourse to the measure of enabling his Majesty to secure and detain those who are suspected of conspiring against his government, I say, we should be wanting to ourselves, if we hesitated in adopting the measure to which the honourable gentleman alluded, seemingly with a dislike, in one part of his speech, but which I hope this house will give effect to before we separate this night. It was my intention to have moved for that law immediately after disposing of the address; but that having suggested itself elsewhere, we may be enabled to give it the force of law more speedily. I hope the interval will not be a

great many minutes before we see that measure has received the sanction of another house of legislature. It is a measure that becomes necessary on grounds intimately connected with the subject now before us. I am very glad there is now no difference of opinion upon the main question; the union of this house is very desirable upon this point; and therefore, although I may protest against some of the doctrines of the honourable gentleman who spoke last, I am unwilling to dwell upon the points on which we differ, because I am unwilling to disturb their unanimity.

The question upon the address was immediately put and agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

A message from the Lords shortly afterwards informed the House that their Lordships had passed a bill, intituled, "an act to empower his Majesty to secure and detain such persons as he may suspect to be conspiring against his person and government."

On Mr. Dundas' moving "that this bill be now read a first time,"

Mr. Sheridan declared, he was so tenacious of the liberty of the subject, and so unwilling to assent to any infringement upon it, that, until better proofs were given of the necessity of the measure than the minister's assertion, he must meet the present motion with his decided negative.

MR. PITT said, that with regard to the existence of a conspiracy, what he had said had been misrepresented by the honourable gentleman * who spoke last. It had been stated, as if he had conveyed an idea, that nothing was to be found in this country but loyalty and attachment to government. That loyalty, indeed, he was happy to think was general; but so far was he from stating it to be unanimous, that, on the contrary, he stated expressly, that although a large portion were favourable to government, there were, nevertheless, a description of persons too considerable, both in number and activity, to be passed by unnoticed, whose conduct was opposite to the general sense of this nation. Was it then to be contended, that, because these circumstances were so plain as to call forth the zeal of almost

* Mr. Sheridan.

every man in the country, except its enemies, therefore we were to take no precaution whatever for our own safety? The honourable gentleman said, there was a period when we ourselves did not think it necessary to take this precaution, without laying before parliament different evidence from that which is before it now. There was, indeed, a time when evil disposed persons were active, and when there were insurrections and difficulties to be overcome, and danger to be avoided.

But would the honourable gentleman undertake to say, that the preparations made by the enemy for a descent upon this country, were at any other period during the war ever so ripe, so extensive, and so truly alarming as at the present crisis? He would hardly risk so ill-founded an assertion. France had, in the former part of the contest, been totally engaged in her continental wars; the powerful confederacy which had been formed against her, kept her troops in constant action, and employed every means and every resource to which she could resort. She was so completely occupied, as to render every hostile design against us ridiculous, and every attempt perfectly nugatory. We were well aware of the weakness of her means, with respect to the execution of any project of invasion against us, though we were at the same time fully satisfied of her destructive views, and her wishes to annihilate us as an independent nation. Situated and involved as she was then, we had less to apprehend from any attempts which, in the heat of inordinate ambition, and urged on by intemperate revenge, she might madly be induced to make, for the purpose of destroying our political and civil liberty, our religious blessings, and our commercial prosperity. But the case was now extremely different.

The French government, freed from the perplexities and struggles in which it had been involved by the military exertions of the continental powers, was at liberty to employ its troops directly against us, and centered all its hopes in attacking this nation, which had so gloriously opposed the torrent of general anarchy, and manfully continued the contest vigorously, successfully, and alone, against all the force, and against all the arts

and machinations which it could employ. The force it had hitherto employed had been defeated with disgrace and shame ; and the base undermining machinations with which it worked, to diffuse disaffection, and propagate the doctrines of anarchy, in the heart of the country, would, he trusted, be speedily and successfully counteracted. - If he wanted any other evidence to shew the necessity of the interference of parliament, to invest the executive government with the power stated in the bill, he would make use of no other to recommend it than the prompt and spontaneous offer which the honourable gentleman had made in the beginning of the debate, to join in the most effectual manner in promoting the zealous and spirited unanimity of the whole body of the people, in their exertions to secure from the rapacity of an unprincipled, plundering, and lawless invader, the possession of every object that was truly dear to them. But was there any thing, he would ask, that could produce unanimity in a greater degree, and secure the vast benefits naturally resulting from the great and happy co-operation of all well-disposed persons, jointly exerting themselves with one heart and with one hand for the preservation of their most valuable rights, than the adoption of the present measure, which went to disable disaffected and dangerous men from destroying, by open acts of violence, and insidious arts, that unanimity on which the honourable gentleman had laid such stress for effecting the salvation of the country ? How, therefore, the honourable gentleman's objections could be fairly reconciled with the animating and patriotic professions which he had made, and which, in fact, did him so much honour, he could not help saying he was at a loss to determine.

The honourable gentleman did feel, from the natural effusion of the warmth and impassioned sentiments of patriotism which he had delivered, that the zealous co-operation of every individual was required at this important crisis in the common defence ; and surely he would not, upon mature reflection, weaken that most desirable end, by his opposition to a bill which directly went to invigorate the public mind, and to cement the effective

and irresistible union of men of all parties and of all descriptions, by freeing them from the apprehensions and dismay to which they were liable, by suffering men tainted with principles hostile to the constitution, and, indeed, bent on the destruction of it, to remain at large, in readiness to contrive and carry into execution their horrid projects. So far, therefore, was the bill from being objectionable, that it, on the contrary, promoted, in the most effectual way, the chief object which the honourable gentleman had at heart. The honourable gentleman had, in the first stage of the debate, acted honourably, and it was earnestly to be hoped that he would follow up that conduct by acting consistently. But was it consistent with that vigilance and with that spirit of precaution, which the honourable gentleman had so strenuously recommended to the house and to the country, first, to let us suffer the invasion to take place, and then proceed to suspend the *Habeas Corpus* act? In other words, we were to be uncommonly vigilant and cautious when the enemy had once obtained a footing in the country; and at the moment when we were threatened with the most imminent peril, we were only then to think of securing ourselves against the dangerous, and perhaps, fatal activity of domestic traitors.

But it was urged, that notorious proofs ought to be furnished to induce the house to give their assent to the present measure. In answer to that, he would ask, what was the nature of the proofs which appeared? The house had been told, on the authority of the executive government, which no gentleman could attempt to say would be lightly hazarded, that a strong spirit of disaffection prevailed both in this country and in Ireland. Yet, if that information was not deemed sufficiently satisfactory, he would maintain, what he was completely satisfied could not be denied, that the house and the public had been told so upon the testimony of the French themselves. Were gentlemen then to disbelieve all these authorities, and were they to give no credit whatever to the publications of the French government, which had uniformly in almost every topic that related to the plan of invasion, held out, as an encouragement and as a facility to execute

it, that the most material assistance was to be expected from the exertions and co-operation of their agents and instruments here? Would the house act differently from the acknowledged practice of their ancestors, even for a considerable time previous to the expected danger, and not adopt salutary measures of defence and general preservation, unless the peril was immediate and unavoidable? Such a conduct would not only be contrary to the rule of right, established and continued by the wisest precedents, but would be directly the reverse of that which human reason ought to dictate.

Taking the question, therefore, in every possible point of view, he was sure that these grounds were sufficient to induce the house to agree to the preamble of the bill, which had been sent to them from the house of lords. That there were men disaffected to the constitution of the country, and to his Majesty's government, no doubt could possibly exist; for the preamble of the bill was proved in the most satisfactory manner by clear and notorious testimony, and the consequence followed of course. He therefore earnestly called upon the house, and the honourable gentleman, in a particular degree, whose conduct in the first stage of the debate was entitled to the most honourable commendation, and whose consistency was on that principle so materially involved in the present question, to agree to the bill, and not to suffer the enemy first to come here, and proceed afterwards to deliberate,

The question for the first reading of the bill was carried upon a division;

Ayes 183

Noes 5

and the bill was afterwards forwarded through all its stages, and passed.

April 25, 1798.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Hobart in the chair,

Mr. Pitt rose, and spoke to the following effect:

SIR — It will be recollected that in November last, when I laid before the committee an outline of the probable amount of the expense of the year, I stated it at the sum of twenty-five millions and a half. It is a satisfaction to me to observe in the outset, that the statement which I shall now have the honour to submit, differs from the former in so few points, the changes which will be remarked in it are so intelligible, and the causes by which they have been occasioned are so plain and obvious, that I shall not be under the necessity of trespassing long upon the time of the committee. The total amount of the supply which I am to lay before you to-day, according to the most accurate estimate that can be formed, and after six months have elapsed, notwithstanding the circumstances which have called upon us to make additions to our expenditure, is 28,490,000*l.*; being an excess of about three millions beyond the former calculation. This variation, it will readily be perceived, results in a great measure from the increased exertions for our national defence, which the state of the preparations of the enemy, and the probability of their attempting to put their designs in execution, have occasioned. I shall proceed, therefore, to state, as shortly as I am able, the variations which have taken place, and explain the articles in which the statement I formerly gave are increased.

The first head of service which naturally occurs, is the navy. I stated the estimate of this branch of expenditure, in November, at the sum of 12,538,000*l.* and the committee have recently added to that head the sum of 910,000*l.* making a total of 13,448,000*l.*

The next article of supply is the army, which the committee will recollect amounted to 10,112,000*l.*, and with the particulars of which I will not at present trouble them. It is, however, necessary to observe, that several additions have been since made. Among these additions is the charge of 1,315,000*l.* for defraying the expense incurred by the supplementary militia, and 130,000*l.* for the provisional cavalry. There is also a sum of 350,000*l.* for the volunteer corps, I mean the expense incurred by the different volunteer corps of infantry: and I have the happiness to

remark, that the body thus raised amounts to no less than 40,000 men. The next article is that which relates to the foreign corps, and makes an expenditure of 226,000*l*. I formerly stated, that the extraordinaries incurred in 1797 were likely to amount to about 1,300,000*l*., and they have only exceeded that sum by 61,000*l*. The original estimate of the charge for barracks was 400,000*l*., to which I must now add the farther increase of 120,000*l*.; and this addition is easily accounted for. It naturally arises from the expenses incurred in consequence of the additional troops which it has been found necessary to keep on foot, and in a state of readiness for action. But here I must observe, that the debt so created would have been equally caused in another way. It would have been allowed to innkeepers for quartering the troops, and for the formation of temporary barracks; and the advantages resulting from employing it in the manner in which it has been laid out, must be obvious to every man who considers the state of the country; as we are enabled by that means more effectually to concentrate our force, and to put ourselves into a more capable situation of repelling any sudden attack. These, Sir, are the whole of the articles which respect the army, with the exception of 700,000*l*. for future extraordinaries. The extraordinaries I had formerly calculated at 2,500,000*l*. but I shall take them now at 3,500,000*l*. These items, taken together, will give a total sum of 12,857,000*l*.

The next head of service which presents itself is the ordnance, which, with a small addition to what I stated in the month of November, amounts to the sum of 1,303,000*l*.

There are very few additions to be made to the charge for miscellaneous articles, and the total of the sums appropriated to this branch may be taken at 682,000*l*. These, Sir, are the different additions which are to be made to the former estimate, which I had the honour of submitting to the committee. There are, besides, it is necessary for me to notice, one or two trifling articles, but there appears on the whole an excess of 3,674,000*l*. beyond the sum stated in November; in that estimate, however, was included an estimate of deficiency of grants, and which it

is now unnecessary to provide for from two material causes. The bank has been paid the sum of 500,000*l.* by the early product of the land tax, which otherwise would have gone to the consolidated fund. Besides, in the distribution paper it appears, that of the whole sum of money granted to the island of Grenada, 150,000*l.* has not been sent, and therefore the deficiency will leave the gross sum of 2,994,000*l.* as an excess.

RECAPITULATION.

Navy - - - - -	£. 13,448,888
Stated in November	£. 12,538,888
Added now - - - - -	910,000
Army - - - - -	12,857,315
Stated in November -	10,112,950
Added now - - - - -	2,744,365
Ordnance - - - - -	1,303,580
Stated in November -	1,291,038
Added now - - - - -	12,542
Miscellaneous - - - - -	680,608
Stated in November -	673,000
Added now - - - - -	7,608
National Debt - - - - -	200,000
	£. 28,490,391

I am aware, however, that in this statement no provision is made for any extraordinary expense which may be necessary in a crisis like the present, when the extent of our exertions must be regulated by the magnitude of the danger with which we are threatened, and by the aspect which that danger may assume, should the enemy persevere in their desperate designs of invasion. For the expense which, in such an emergency, would be required, we must provide as circumstances shall direct. We can only take care to cover by specific provisions those sums which are stated upon actual estimate. No calculation can be made of the expense which such an exigency, as that for which we ought to prepare ourselves, will occasion. It must be gene-

rally provided, therefore, by a vote of credit, which it may either exceed, or of which it may fall short, as the case may happen. What other precautions such a state of things may require, will be subject of future consideration. At present I propose only to make provision for the specific services which can be calculated upon estimate, reserving till a future period the motion I shall have the honour of making for a vote of credit. Gentlemen may be desirous to know to what extent that vote of credit is intended to be. As far as I can at present form any judgment upon the subject, two millions will be the sum proposed.

Having stated the variations which circumstances have produced in the supply, it remains for me to explain the alterations which have taken place, and the additions that may be necessary in the plan of the ways and means since November last.

The land and malt, then, I take as usual at 2,750,000*l*. The next article is the assessed taxes. Here the committee will be aware that a considerable variation has taken place from the sum at which their produce was originally estimated. The modifications which, upon the wisest principles, were introduced into the bill in its progress through the house, have greatly reduced the amount at which this article was stated. The committee must likewise be sensible that it would be impossible to form any thing like a correct estimate of the sum, which the measure, with all its modifications, may be expected to produce. In many parts of the kingdom, the charges to be made have not been ascertained, and the appeals to which they must give rise have not yet been decided. As far as can be collected from the returns, there is reason to believe, however, that the defalcation in the produce of this measure will not be such as to diminish or destroy its beneficial tendency. In the metropolis, too, from which the returns have almost only been received, the abatements will be found chiefly to apply. In the country, the same circumstances which, in the case of the metropolis, rendered the modification necessary, do not exist; and the produce of the tax, therefore, will not be expected to fall short in the same propor-

tion. The original amount of the tax, on which the increase was imposed, is 2,700,000*l*. I conceive then, that I may very safely state the probable produce of the increased assessment at 4,500,000*l*.

While we make allowance for the diminution which the modifications of the act may occasion, we must, on the other hand, take into view the assistance which its produce will derive from the voluntary contributions, which so honourably for the zeal and the spirit of the country have every where been set on foot. This liberal and patriotic fund will supply what it was prudent in the legislature to remit. It is, Sir, I am happy in having an opportunity to observe, the most satisfactory and irresistible testimony of the decisive sentiments of the nation at large, at the present important moment, to support with their property the independence and prosperity of their country. It forms the most cordial proof of the unanimity of a great and free nation, to support that constitution, under the protection of which they enjoy so many extensive and solid advantages. The great mass of the people have, by furnishing in a voluntary manner these contributions, told us their manly determination to resist any encroachments which may be attempted on their liberty. They have told us not by words, but by actions. They have felt that they were engaged in a contest in which their property was at stake, and they have come forward with a part of that property, to enable the government to make exertions great and suitable to the pressure and importance of the occasion. The enthusiasm of contributing to the national defence, has pervaded and animated all ranks and orders of men in the country. Some exceptions I admit there are, but they weigh little in the general scale. These honourable and patriotic contributions have been equally and proportionably furnished by the landed gentlemen, by the monied interest, by the merchant, by the artizan, by the mechanic, and by the labourer. There is not, Sir, a single class, or description of persons, in which we shall not find the most satisfactory proofs of true patriotism, and distinguished zeal; and these I take to be

the best and most effectual answers we can make to the insolent threats of the enemy. Knowing, therefore, from the best sources of information, that the spirit of this nation is rising with an energy incalculable, that every day furnishes additional proofs of the generosity and patriotism of every part of the country, I am rather fearful of under-rating the resources which this spirit may call forth, than of computing them above their amount.— In many parts of the country the most liberal contributions we know to have been made, the precise amount of which cannot yet be ascertained. Of the whole sum subscribed at the bank, two-thirds may be taken as voluntary contributions, which on the present amount will be 1,350,000*l*. As it is impossible to calculate the extent to which this system so happily begun, may be carried in different parts of the country from which no returns have yet been received, I am sure the committee will not think the calculation exorbitant, if I take the article of voluntary contribution at 1,500,000*l*. It would give me pleasure to find that it will exceed the sum at which I state its probable amount; but in all the circumstances I feel a considerable confidence that to this extent we may look to it as a certain resource.

The next article for which I propose to take credit, is one which has not yet been submitted to parliament, but which I entertain a sanguine hope will meet with their approbation. It is an object, which in a considerable degree had occupied the attention of the commercial and mercantile world. It includes more to recommend it to the attention of the house, with less of solid objection, than any measure which for some time has been submitted to parliament. It will be attended with an additional protection to our trade, and without imposing any new burthens upon the country, it will secure an additional resource for the support of the war. It is my intention to propose this measure only as applicable to the war, and to a war such as the present. A considerable part of the recommendation which it possesses, arises from the particular nature of the contest in which we are now engaged. It has this farther advantage too,

that a considerable part of it will be paid by foreigners. It will take from the enemy one of the resources of maritime rapine, which has been the only employment and encouragement for their marine in the absence of legitimate commerce. The plan to which I allude then is, to adopt some regulations respecting the convoy of our trade, and to impose a certain tax upon exports and imports, in such manner as not to risk the diminution of our commerce; a tax too that will be repaid by the decrease in the price of insurance, which will fall upon the consumer, and diminish the number of prizes which our extended commerce has held out to the predatory spirit of the enemy. I am aware that this subject will require considerable discussion. On the face of it, however, it is one to which no objection occurs. I do not propose to take it, supposing it should receive the approbation of the house, for more than a year, or for the interest of the loan. But when our increased and increasing trade requires additional protection, it cannot but be desirable to adopt a plan which will not only secure this important object, but afford a considerable resource to the support of the present contest. In this way, then, from the best general estimate that can be made on this subject at present, I think I may venture to state this object as capable of producing the sum of 1,500,000*l.*

In the statement which I made in November last, I took credit for 500,000*l.* upon the consolidated fund. Upon looking at the consolidated fund, and the produce of the taxes, so far as they can be ascertained up to April, I have the satisfaction to see that the sources, from which the consolidated fund is supplied, are amply productive. Still, however, as the charges on the payments to be made on the loan will, in the course of the year, come upon the consolidated fund, I do not think it proper to include in the ways and means any supply to be derived from this source. I propose, therefore, to leave it to provide these objects, and to redeem the arrears of charges upon the grants of 1797. At the same time, however, I shall proceed to state from the most authentic papers, the amount of the revenue up to the present period, as far as those parts, which have been more recently

imposed, can be ascertained. I am the more anxious to enter into this statement, that, from a comparison of the permanent revenue with the permanent charge, gentlemen may be able to judge of our whole situation, and the adequacy of our resources to support the efforts we are called upon to exert. The total amount, then, of the old revenue, exclusive of the taxes imposed in 1797, was 18,570,000*l.* The amount of taxes imposed in 1797, to the extent of about three millions, is to be added. It cannot be expected that these taxes should yet be placed in a state of collection by which their produce could accurately be ascertained. About 1,500,000*l.* has already been obtained on account of these taxes. From the best calculation which can be made, it is computed that their permanent produce will be 2,900,000*l.*

The tax upon legacies was estimated at 120,000*l.* which, from its nature, must require time to come up to the estimate. It has yet produced only between 50 and 60,000*l.* I entertain a hope, that when it finds its level, it will appear that it was not over-rated in the estimate. I shall, therefore, now state it at 100,000*l.*

The next is an article upon which various opinions have been entertained as to its produce. It certainly has hitherto fallen short of its estimate. One principal cause of this is, that rumours had been circulated that the tax was to be repealed, which prevented people from renewing their stock. I am of opinion, it will in time advance much farther, than those who disapproved of it ever imagined. It has of late advanced considerably, and is continuing to advance;—I mean the article of wine. If the house shall think proper to persevere in the continuance of that duty, I am of opinion, that the revenue will benefit nearly to the extent which I originally stated; I shall, therefore, estimate the produce of this duty at 400,000*l.* more than it has hitherto yielded to the public. These sums, being added together, will afford a total of 20,470,000*l.*, including the supposed increase of 1797, the legacy duty, and the article of wine.

I have proceeded in this way to judge of the permanent revenue by the produce of the last year only of an expensive war; and now, Sir, if gentlemen will take the trouble to look at this

revenue, and add to it the land and malt, they will find no less a sum than twenty-three millions sterling to be set against the permanent charges, which amount to 23,295,000*l.*; and they will also find, instead of a diminution of the permanent taxes, a permanent revenue, amid all the burdens inseparable from a state of war, balancing all the permanent charges that can be set against it.

I have neither mentioned the lottery, nor the probable returns expected from India, in aid of the voluntary contributions; but I think it right to state these objects to the committee, for the purpose of fairly shewing the flourishing situation of the public revenue. I beg leave to observe, that I have taken the permanent revenue on the supposition that the peace estimate would be calculated on the same grounds as previous to the war. The estimate before the war was sixteen millions, and the addition of 7,295,000*l.* since will give the gross amount of 23,295,000*l.* The surplus of the lottery is 200,000*l.*; and I believe I have now, Sir, mentioned every article which it may be necessary for the committee to consider, but the loan. The loan, it is now fully understood, consists of fifteen millions, exclusive of two millions to be advanced to Ireland. The committee will see that the different items of the ways and means stand thus:

Land and malt	- - - - -	£2,750,000
Lottery	- - - - -	200,000
Assessed taxes	- - - - -	£. 4,500,000
Voluntary contributions	1,500,000	} 7,500,000
Tax on imports and exports	1,500,000	
Bank advance	- - - - -	3,000,000
Loan	- - - - -	15,000,000
		£. 28,450,000

which within a trifle meets the amount of the supply.

The next circumstance to be considered is the terms of the loan; and upon that subject it is not necessary that I should de-

tain the committee for a long time, because the discussion of another subject, in which this loan was incidentally mentioned by me, brought forward the general terms of that loan; and it was then noticed in a manner that has rendered it unnecessary for me to say much upon it now. It is, however, matter of great satisfaction to me, and must be so to this committee, to reflect that we have a loan upon such terms at the present moment. It must give us all great satisfaction to find so much confidence in the monied men; and here I cannot help observing, that I do believe that much of the advantage which the public derive from this bargain has arisen from the confidence which monied men have, that the plan now before parliament for the sale of the land-tax will be adopted. Much satisfaction as I have from this, I have a still greater satisfaction in reflecting that the people of England feel they are safe, because they take such measures as ought to save them. The people of England, and the monied interest among them, shew the enemy that, while they alarm us with threats of invasion, we have taken measures for our own security, in a manner calculated to meet our danger. This is a circumstance for congratulation to us all; inferior to it, although important, is the detail.

When the bargain was concluded the 3 per cent consols were at $48\frac{3}{8}$ and the 3 per cent. reduced were at $47\frac{5}{8}$. In the former, 150*l.* was valued at 72*l.* 11*s.* 3*d.*; and in the latter, 50*l.* was taken at 22*l.* 16*s.* 3*d.*, which, with the market price of $13\frac{1}{2}$ years of long annuity, or 4*l.* 4*s.* $6\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* made 99*l.* 12*s.* $0\frac{1}{4}$. So that on the face of the bargain, the subscriber takes less than his 100*l.* The discount is certainly a different matter, and was calculated at the rate of 5 per cent. as was the case last year. But there are two ways of considering this; the advantage to the contractor arises from the anticipation of future instalments by prompt payment, and there the discount is of course greater; but with respect to those who wait for the fixed period of future payment, the advantage is less. The first gain by prompt payment 102*l.* 4*s.* $6\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* for 100*l.*, and the last only 101*l.* 0*s.* $7\frac{3}{4}$ *d.*; so that there is a bonus of 2*l.* 4*s.* $6\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* to the one, and but of

1*l.* 0*s.* 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* to the others, Such, Sir, I must consider at this period as an extraordinary event, and I might be inclined to call it an unaccountable one, if I did not know that it was to be answered for by the spirit and patriotism of the country. Looking, however, at it with the view of interest, we must see it as a bargain concluded at 8*s.* interest less than the loan of last year was made. What a consideration does this give rise to, with respect to the energy and exertions of the country! Have we not the strongest motives to be convinced, that after twelve months have elapsed, and in a period of difficulty and apparent financial embarrassment, our resources appear superior to any check, and are greater comparatively than before? Having stated this as the amount of the charge to be incurred by the loan, I must observe, that eight millions of it is to be provided for by the gradual payment of the assessed taxes. We have therefore seven millions to find taxes for; and adding to this 200,000*l.* to be applied to the sinking fund, and taking the interest of the whole sum of 7,200,000*l.* at 8*l.* 5*s.* per cent. we shall have 577,000*l.* to provide for annually.

I took a view on a former occasion of the unfunded debt, and by simplifying the accounts, shewed what the whole excess of the unfunded or navy debt only was, from the commencement of the present war to that moment. I then mentioned that I should, perhaps, propose to fund two or three millions of the navy debt; but, upon mature consideration, I find that it will be unnecessary to fund the navy debt, and that it will be more proper to leave it in its actual situation until peace. In the year 1792 it amounted to 2,745,000*l.* and it now exceeds 6,000,000*l.*; so that the interest to be provided for will be 186,000*l.* which added to 577,000*l.* will amount to 763,000*l.* in taxes to meet the interest of all the charges for the present year.

The first article to which I would call the attention of the committee as being a fit one for a new duty, is an article which has remained so long without any additional duty, and is so diffused in general consumption that it will, I have no doubt, produce the sum at which I have estimated it; at the same time it

will bear on the lower classes of the community so slightly, as to be matter of great satisfaction to me to state it to the committee. I mean the article of salt. A considerable profit will accrue to the revenue from certain regulations that are to be proposed with regard to the mode of collecting the duty, but for which I shall at present take almost nothing. The amount of the tax which I propose to the committee as fit to be imposed upon this article, is 5s. in the bushel, that is to say, double the present duty. This will produce 500,000*l*. Some deductions are to be made in case of prompt payment. The charges of the management will not be increased; on the contrary, they will be diminished, so that I shall take for this article 503,000*l*. This the committee will see goes a great way towards the whole produce. It is necessary to know what will be the pressure of this tax, especially on the lower orders of the community. I have considered it a good deal, and, although I do not say that I am strictly correct in the opinion I have formed upon it, yet, after the best view I have been able to take, I am led to believe that in a great number of instances the consumption of a small family is not more than half a bushel a year; which will call upon the lower class in each family to defray an additional expense of half a crown a year. Comparing this with the effect of various taxes that have been imposed at various times, and which, with the best care this house could take to spare the lower orders in the progress of this war, I think the present is a very moderate tax. We must remember that all taxes on the articles of life must in some degree affect the lowest as well as the highest; I hope, therefore, this impost will not be considered as an unreasonable one. I hope, also, that if any man should tell them they are heavily taxed, he will tell them likewise that if the nobleman, if the man of property, if indeed all the higher classes of the community be interested in the present contest, they cannot be more so than the lower orders are; that there is no man in the social state that is more deeply or even so deeply interested in this contest as he, who is doomed to subsist upon the produce of his own labour.—That it is a contest which involves the

happiness of the lower orders more immediately than that of any other ; that the French revolution has been followed up by a system of flattery and pride to the passions of the lower class, while its effect has been an utter destruction to their comfort ; that of all descriptions of men in Europe, none have been more unhappily the dupes and victims of such a system than the honest, laborious, but too credulous husbandman and mechanic ;— a system that has filled the greater part of Europe, indeed, with an equal portion of misery and disgrace. This much I have conceived it necessary to state, in order to obviate the objections of those who might suppose that the tax in question would operate as a grievance on the lower orders of people.

The next thing which I mean to propose as an object of taxation, is an article of consumption which is in general use, but the duty on which will fall less heavy on the lower orders of people than that which I have already laid before the committee. I cannot at present see how far this tax may interfere with the interest of the East India company, but I hope that it will prove satisfactory to them and the country at large. It is a duty of 5 per cent. on tea ; but this duty is not to be laid indiscriminately, it is only to take place on what sells above 2s. 6d. per pound, and on that account will not touch that species of tea which is in general use among the lower classes of people. This tax will produce the sum of 111,500*l.* ; for it is undeniable that the tea valued at above 2s. 6d. per *lb.* has considerably increased in the quantity of its consumption.

The next article, Sir, which I have to submit to the committee, rests upon principles very different from those on which I have proposed the two other subjects of taxation. It does not affect necessaries in its operation, nor, I confess, is it very certain with respect to its produce ; yet my conjectures are, notwithstanding, sufficiently sanguine. Although it is not a necessary article of life, it is nevertheless an article of choice and taste, which I wish by no means to check the enjoyment of. I hope, I may say, that, without any bigoted attachment to customs, or without any affection for pride or for vanity, it is an article that

deserves tenderness and respect. I mean to propose an impost on the use of armorial bearings. Perhaps some may think, or invidiously insinuate, that by this I prove myself an advocate for a levelling system. I feel, however, that it is in consequence of these species of distinctions, or the hope of obtaining them, that many men have performed the most heroic deeds; and I think that those who possess such distinctions, wisely set upon them a real value, and, in so doing, form a judgment which their passions dictate and their reason approves. Instead of being evidence of their vanity, it proves their wisdom; as in the present state of the world, these links in the chain and order of society are highly essential to the welfare of us all; and it is because I do believe so, that I propose this impost, and feel confident, that those who are its objects will cheerfully defray it.

I thought it right to say thus much upon this subject, because some whose sentiments are the most adverse to my feelings will be most ready to approve of this measure, and with whose general opinions I should be very sorry to agree, as I should to differ from those of the objects of this impost. Those who are entitled to use these marks of distinction I do not mean to put to proof of their strict and legal right to do so. I mean that they should be left to their own discretion in that respect, in the same manner as those who take out game certificates; leaving the question of the origin of the right to the determination of antiquarian law. I therefore propose, that a tax of two guineas be imposed upon all persons using carriages decorated with armorial bearings; one guinea on those who are housekeepers, and who make use of plate decorated in the same manner; and 10s. 6d. on all other persons not housekeepers, using their armorial bearings in other ways. My data on which I am to proceed, are not, I confess, extremely accurate; but I find, from the inspection made by the heralds, between 1615 and 1670, that the number of the heads of families by the last return, given in the year 1670, amounted to 8405. Allowing, therefore, for the extinction of many families since, and the substitution of many more, I shall take the whole number at 9453, who will not, it is to be

presumed, lay this distinction aside. I shall estimate under each name six housekeepers bearing arms, and multiplying the first number of 9453 by 6, we shall have a product of 56,718; to which may be added 4000 more from Ireland. I shall suppose 12,000 of these keeping carriages with armorial bearings, which at 2*l.* 2*s.* each, will give a sum of 24,000*l.*—48,000 not keeping carriages will produce 50,000*l.*; and as I shall not take more than two persons to each family at 10*s.* 6*d.* this will give a farther sum of 66,000*l.* making a gross sum of 140,000*l.*; to which may be added 10,000*l.* more, under certain regulations, for foreigners, so as to make

The whole amount to - - - - - 150,000

Which together with the sum estimated for salt - 503,000

For tea - - - - - 111,000

Makes in all - £ 764,000

This, which I have now stated, is the whole amount of the supplies for the present year: and I hope it will appear to the committee, that the statements which I made before Christmas last, as to the probable amount of these supplies, were correct; and that I have not exceeded in any respect the sums, which I supposed at that time the public service would require. This can be shewn by the manner in which the ways and means are provided for. Nothing can bear a stronger testimony of the opinion of the country at large, as to the spirit which animates all ranks of people, and the greatness of our resources, than the favourable terms upon which the loan has been contracted for. And I hope that the committee will be of opinion, that the taxes to defray the interest on that loan, are founded on a plan that will be as likely to render them productive as any other which could be laid before the house: they are calculated to bear as lightly on all classes of people as any burden which could be laid upon the public; and as I can see no solid objection which can be made against them by any person, I hope I have in this measure, as well as

in every other thing relating to the supplies of the year, discharged my duty to this house and to the country.

Mr. Pitt then concluded by moving resolutions pursuant to the statements in his speech.

The resolutions were severally put and agreed to.

May 25, 1798.

MR. PITT, conformably to the notice he had previously given, and after stating that the object of his motion was precisely the same with that, for which a similar bill had been brought in in the year 1779, namely, to suspend for a limited time the protections which various descriptions of persons enjoy, to prevent them from being impressed into the service of the navy, moved for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual manning of his Majesty's navy; at the same time intimating, that, as the present alarming situation of the country made it necessary that this measure should be passed without any delay, he should wish that the bill might this day proceed through its different stages, with a suitable pause at each, if required, and that it should be sent to the Lords for their concurrence.

Mr. Tierney complained of the very extraordinary and precipitate manner in which the right honourable gentleman had called upon the house to adopt the measure proposed. He had heard no arguments, he said, that proved its propriety; he knew of no sudden emergency that urged its necessity; even if he had, some time ought to have been allowed him to weigh the force of such arguments, and examine the nature of such an emergency, before he proceeded to give three or four votes on a measure of which no notice of any sort had been given; and of which no idea had ever entered his mind. If the right honourable gentleman persisted in hurrying the bill through the house in the manner proposed, he must give it his decided negative, however reluctantly he opposed any measure that was said to be necessary to the safety of the country. For, from what he had lately seen, he must view all the measures of ministers as hostile to the liberty of the subject; and the present measure he regarded with peculiar jealousy, as it went directly to rob them of the few remaining privileges they were still permitted to enjoy.

MR. PITT replied, that if every measure adopted against the designs of France, was to be considered as hostile to the liberty of this country, then indeed his idea of liberty differed very widely from that which seemed to be entertained by the honourable

gentleman. The house would recollect, however that honourable gentleman might say to the contrary, that he had given notice of the present motion, though he had not judged it prudent then to explain the mode in which it was to be put into execution. Neither could it be fairly supposed, that the present measure was to be brought forward as the usual one for augmenting the navy. A bill of the nature of the latter was introduced about ten days ago; and at that time he stated to the house, that if they acceded to the proposed augmentation of the navy, they must adopt some vigorous measure to make that augmentation effectual, as nothing but a law of a vigorous nature could succeed in making the intended number of seamen complete. When the honourable gentleman complained of the manner in which the bill was to be hurried through the house, and hinted that it was too frequently resorted to, he saw the suspension of the *habeas corpus* act was lurking in his mind. The honourable gentleman would have a long notice given of the present motion, and would retard its progress through the house. He acknowledges that, were it not passed in a day, those whom it might concern might elude its effect, thus assigning himself the reason for its immediate adoption. But if the measure be necessary, and that a notice of it would enable its effect to be eluded, how can the honourable gentleman's opposition to it be accounted for, but from a desire to obstruct the defence of the country?

MR. PITT said, that he feared the house must wait a long

Mr. Tierney called the right honourable gentleman to order. This language, Sir, said he, is surely not parliamentary, and upon you only can I call for protection.

The Speaker observed, that whatever had a tendency to throw suspicion on the sentiments of a member, if conveyed in language that clearly marked that intention, such language was, without doubt, irregular and unparliamentary; but if it argued no such intention, there was no room for censuring it as disorderly: if, therefore, it was the opinion of the House, that such was the fair import of the language used by the right honourable gentleman, they would judge of it accordingly; but they would first wait to hear the right honourable gentleman's explanation.

time, if they waited for his explanation on the present subject. The sense of what he advanced was, that there was no distinction between the two cases in question. That if notice was to be given of the measure under consideration, that notice would only serve to elude its execution, and therefore no man could be justified in opposing the necessary expedition that made the measure effectual; or if he did, he must surely appear to obstruct the measures employed for the defence of the country. He knew very well that it was unparliamentary to state the motives that actuated the opinions of gentlemen, but it was impossible to go into arguments in favour of a question, without sometimes hinting at the motives that induced an opposition to it. He submitted to the judgment of the house the propriety and necessity of the arguments he had urged, and he would not depart from any thing he had there advanced, by either retracting or explaining them.*

The bill afterwards went through all its stages, and was ordered to be carried to the Lords; from whom a message was returned in a few minutes, that their Lordships had agreed to the bill.

December 3, 1798.

MR. PITT moved the order of the day for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, to consider of a supply to be granted to his Majesty.

The House having resolved itself into the said committee, Mr. Pitt further moved, that the act of the 38th of his present Majesty, chap. 16, for granting an aid or contribution to his Majesty, might be read, and that it might be an instruction to the committee to consider of the said act; which being agreed to, he then addressed the committee as follows:

BEFORE I proceed to submit to the committee the very important matters which form the subject of this day's considera-

* In consequence of what passed between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Tierney on this occasion, a meeting took place on the 27th, at three o'clock in the afternoon, on Putney Heath. Mr. Pitt was accompanied by Mr. Ryder, and Mr. Tierney by Sir George Walpole.

tion, I conceive it necessary to take a diligent review of the general amount of the total services of the present year, and of the ways and means applicable to those services. Without adopting this method, I do not think it would be possible to inform your judgment with any degree of accuracy, respecting the propriety of the measure I have to propose, for raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, or be able to enforce those arguments I shall adduce in support of that measure. It is a matter of extreme satisfaction to me, that it will appear to the committee, from the estimate I shall now produce, compared with former estimates, that although our expenses are beyond what they ever were, yet that our means of supplying them are so ample and extensive, that the country is placed in a proud and eminent situation, beyond what it has enjoyed at any former period.

I shall begin by stating what has been voted as the amount of the supply under the head of the services for the navy, with the exception of what is necessary for transport services. All these accounts have this day been laid before us; and it appears that the total sum for the ordinaries and extraordinaries of the navy and transport services amounts to 13,642,000*l.* being the same sum, within a very small amount, as was granted in the course of last session, and which I have the satisfaction of assuring the committee is likely to prove sufficient for the whole expenses of the navy, without leaving any necessity for augmentation. The next head of expense is the army, in which the estimates amount to 8,840,000*l.* Gentlemen will recollect the extraordinaries in the course of last session, to be incurred in 1798, were stated at 3,200,000*l.* There was also voted a sum of 1,000,000*l.* as a

After some ineffectual attempts, on the part of the seconds, to prevent further proceedings, the parties took their ground at the distance of twelve paces. A case of pistols was fired at the same moment without effect; a second case was also fired in the same way, Mr. Pitt firing his pistol in the air: the seconds then jointly interfered, and insisted that the matter should go no farther, it being their decided opinion that sufficient satisfaction had been given, and that the business was ended with perfect honour to both parties.

vote of credit, applicable as extraordinaries to unforeseen expenses. This vote of credit will cover all the extraordinary expenses to the end of the year, so that, as in the article of the navy, there will be no past arrears to be discharged. But with respect to the vote of credit for this year, one million will be wanted to discharge that amount issued in exchequer bills. Under the article, then, of army expenditure, there remain the extraordinary services of the year 1799, which I may put at two millions. Thus the total amount, under the head of army, will be 8,840,000*l.* including the one million for the discharge of exchequer bills issued, and two millions for the extraordinary services of 1799. Under the head of ordnance services, including the expenses which have not been provided for, there has been voted the sum of 1,570,000*l.* The next article is that of the miscellaneous services. The plantation estimates have already been voted, but there are other minuter parts of those services which have not yet undergone a discussion in this house. The amount will be rather less than it was last session. I state it 600,000*l.* To this is to be added the usual sum voted towards the redemption of the national debt, above the annual million, which is 200,000*l.* There are other sums, which are generally voted under the head of deficiency of grants. Among these is a sum due for interest on treasury and exchequer bills paid off, amounting to 565,000*l.*; the discount on prompt payments upon the loan, amounting to 210,000*l.*; the interest on exchequer bills circulated within the year, and charged upon the succeeding year, 300,000*l.*; in addition to this, there is the deficiency of the land and malt in the act passed two years ago, amounting to 300,000*l.* These sums swell the total of the supply to 29,272,000*l.* This total, Sir, does not differ in any material degree from the amount of the supply of last session.

Towards raising this supply, it will naturally occur to the mind of every gentleman in the committee, that the same resources will be applicable as are always applicable at all periods, whether of peace or of war. The land and malt have always been taken at 2,750,000*l.*: there remains the lottery, which will

not produce less than 200,000*l.* and the growing produce of the consolidated fund. I have stated these articles first, for reasons which will be obvious to the committee. These are the ordinary resources. The growing produce of the consolidated fund would amount for one year to 2,100,000*l.* but in the course of the present year that produce will be affected by some heavy burdens;—by the remains of charges in arrears; by the interest, if it is still to remain a burden upon us, on the imperial loan; and by the growing interest on such parts of loans raised on the credit of levying any tax, for which no interest has been provided. On the other hand, the growing produce will be swelled by the advances to the planters of Grenada, amounting to 800,000*l.* I take, therefore, the probable growing produce of the consolidated fund at 1,500,000*l.* In addition to this, and independently of the voluntary contributions, a tax was laid in the last session of parliament upon the exports and imports, founded upon the peculiar situation of our trade, as it then stood. That tax, Sir, has not only yielded to the full amount of what I estimated it at, but has even exceeded it; and I have the satisfaction of finding, that now, when that trade is brought to the test of a duty upon the declarations of the parties themselves, allowing them indulgences, and granting them a deduction of ten per cent.—I have, I repeat, Sir, the satisfaction of stating, that the total amount of our exports and imports exceeds, in a large degree, the largest sum that any man ever yet ventured to state upon the subject. That duty I estimated to produce the sum of 1,200,000*l.* I have the best reason for believing that the actual produce of it will be much beyond that sum. In addition to this duty upon exports and imports, and which, as far as can be done without diminishing our resources, which must be contemplated with the greatest exultation, because they prove the extent of our commerce, in addition to that duty, now that the whole trade of the West Indies is centered in this country, a reduction may be made with advantage to the nation in the large sums paid upon drawbacks, and bounties upon exports. Into this subject, however, it is not my intention to

enter at the present moment. I mention it, because it will make an increase to the tax upon exports and imports, which I have every reason to believe will amount, with that increase, to 1,700,000*l*. I have thus enumerated the principal articles:

The land and malt - - - - -	£. 2,750,000
Lottery - - - - -	200,000
The growing produce of the consolidated fund	1,500,000
The tax upon imports and exports - - -	1,700,000
Total	£. 6,150,000

The remainder of the sum is that which must be raised either by a tax within the year, in the same manner as the assessed tax bill of last year, or by a loan. It will be to be considered, how the committee will divide that remaining sum between them. The sum to be provided for is upwards of twenty-three millions. Gentlemen will recollect, that, in the debates upon the subject of the assessed taxes last session, two fundamental principles were established as the rule by which we should be guided in providing for the supplies for the service of the year. These were, first, to reduce the total amount to be at present raised by a loan; and next, as far as it was not reducible, to reduce it to such a limit, that no more loan should be raised than a temporary tax should defray within a limited time. In the first place, the tax acceded to by the house last session was for the purpose of providing for the supplies of the year; and in the next place, for the purpose of extinguishing the loan raised in that year. From the modifications, however, which that measure underwent after its being first proposed, the produce of it was diminished to a considerable extent. Other means indeed were adopted to remedy the deficiency which was thus occasioned.—The voluntary and cheerful efforts which, so honourably to individuals, and to the country, came in aid of the deficit of the assessed taxes, and the superior produce of the exports and imports beyond the estimate, brought the amount of the sums raised to that at which they had been calculated. The different ar-

articles were estimated at seven millions and a half, and this sum is fully covered by the actual receipt under the distinct heads. It gives me, indeed, the most heartfelt satisfaction to state, that notwithstanding the difficulties which the measure encountered from the shameful evasion, or rather the scandalous frauds by which its effects were counteracted, the total amount which was expected has yet been realized. The meanness which shrunk from fair and equal contribution has been compensated to the public by the voluntary exertions of patriotism. The produce of the assessed taxes, under all the modifications, and all the evasions, is four millions. I had taken it at four and a half after the modifications were adopted. This deficiency is supplied by the excess on the head of voluntary contributions. In proportion as the one has fallen short of the estimate, the other has gone beyond it in favour of the country. If I did not calculate the evasion, the fraud, and the meanness which have struggled to defeat the operation of the assessed taxes, and I mention it with shame that in a moment like the present, in a contest so awfully interesting to every individual and to the nation, there have been men base enough to avail themselves of the general modifications which were intended to relieve those who might have been called upon to contribute beyond their means, to avoid that fair assessment which corresponded with their circumstances, I am happy to find that the honour of the nation has been vindicated by the noble and generous aid of voluntary contribution, and that the sum which I had stated is greatly exceeded. Not only in this country but in every part of the British dependencies the patriotic spirit has displayed itself, and wherever they were placed, the subjects of England have shewn themselves worthy of the relations by which they are connected with their country. Instead of 1,500,000*l.* the voluntary contributions already exceed two millions; and the sum of seven millions and a half, for which credit was taken, has been effective to the public service.

Satisfactory as it must be to review the circumstances to which we owe these advantages, and the benefits which the mode of

raising the supplies to a considerable extent adopted last session has produced, it is unnecessary for me to state, that, however the principle may deserve our approbation, it is still much to be desired that its effects should be more extensive, and its application more efficient. It is in vain to disguise that, by the causes to which I have alluded, the full advantage of the principle has not been obtained. The wishes and the interest of individuals, I am sure, must unite in demanding a more comprehensive, a more equal, and a more vigorous application of a principle, the rare advantages of which we have been able to ascertain, if we have not yet been so fortunate as to enjoy. Last session those who acknowledged the importance of the principle of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, confined their objections to the proportion fixed upon the scale of the assessed taxes, as unequal in its application, and liable to great evasion in practice. Though not insensible of the weight of the objection, I then felt it my duty, convinced as I was of the immense advantages of the system, to adopt some visible criterion by which to estimate and to regulate the extent of contribution, if it was not possible to devise means of embracing fully every class of property, and every source of contribution. I felt it materially important, to follow some durable, some apparent and sensible criterion, by which to apportion the burden. At the same time I felt, that although the assessed taxes furnished the most comprehensive, and most general, and the most efficient scale of contribution, there necessarily must be much income, much wealth, great means, which were not included in its application. It now appears that not by any error in the calculation of our resources, not by any exaggeration of our wealth, but by the general facility of modification, by the anxiety to render the measure as little oppressive as possible, a defalcation has arisen which ought not to have taken place. Yet under the disadvantage and imperfections of an unequal and inadequate scale of application, the effects of the measure have tended to confirm our estimates of its benefits, and to encourage us to persevere in its principle. Every circumstance in our situation, every event in the retrospect of

our affairs, every thing which strikes our view as we look around us, demonstrates the advantages of the system of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, and ought to induce us to enforce it more effectually to prevent those frauds, which an imperfect criterion and a loose facility of modification have introduced; to repress those evasions so disgraceful to the country, so injurious to those who honourably discharge their equal contribution, and, above all, so detrimental to the great object of national advantage which it is intended to promote. In these sentiments, our leading principle should be to guard against all evasion, to endeavour by a fair and strict application, to realize that full tenth, which it was the original purpose of the measure of the assessed taxes to obtain, and to extend this as far as possible in every direction, till it may be necessary clearly to mark the modification, or to renounce, in certain instances, the application of it altogether. If then, the committee assent to this principle, they must feel the necessity of following it up, by a more comprehensive scale and by more efficient provisions. They will perceive the necessity of obtaining a more specific statement of income, than the loose scale of modification, which, under the former measure, permitted such fraud and evasion. If such a provision be requisite to correct the abuses of collection, to obviate the artifices of dishonesty, to extend the utility of the whole system, it will be found that many of the regulations of the old measure will be adapted to a more comprehensive and efficient application of the principle. If regulations can be devised to prevent an undue abatement, and to proportion the burden to the real ability, means must be employed to reach those resources which, *prima facie*, it is impossible under the present system of the assessed taxes to touch. While inaccuracy, fraud, inequality be grievances, which it is desirable to remedy, it will be an additional satisfaction, that when compelled to adopt means to prevent the defects of which we complain, we shall be enabled likewise to improve and to extend the benefits we have obtained. The experience which we have had upon the subject, proves that we must correct and remedy, in order to secure the advantages

which the measure is calculated to afford. It is in our power to make them our own. I think I can shew that whatever benefit the principle upon which we have begun to act, is fitted to bestow, may by a liberal, fair and efficient application, be carried to an extent far greater than has yet been obtained, an extent equal to every object of great and magnanimous effort, to every purpose of national safety and glory, to every advantage of permanent credit and of encreased prosperity.

Impressed then with the importance of the subject, convinced that we ought, as far as possible, to prevent all evasion and fraud, it remains for us to consider, by what means these defects may be redressed, by what means a more equal scale of contribution can be applied, and a more extensive effect obtained. For this purpose it is my intention to propose, that the presumption founded upon the assessed taxes shall be laid aside, and that a general tax shall be imposed upon all the leading branches of income. No scale of income indeed which can be devised will be perfectly free from the objection of inequality, or entirely cut off the possibility of evasion. All that can be attempted is, to approach as near as circumstances will permit to a fair and equal contribution. I trust that the opinion of the country will concur with the disposition of parliament to give that energy to our exertions, to give that stability to our resources, which our present situation and our future prosperity demand. I trust that all who value the national honour, and the national safety, will co-operate in the desirable purpose of obtaining, by an efficient and comprehensive tax upon real ability, every advantage which flourishing and invigorated resources can confer upon national efforts. The details of a measure which attempts an end so great and important, must necessarily require serious and mature deliberation. At present all that I can pretend to do is, to lay before the committee an outline of a plan which endeavours to combine every thing at which such a measure ought to aim. This outline I shall now proceed to develope to the committee as clearly and distinctly as I am able.

It will occur to every one to enquire what species of commis-

sioners shall be vested with the power of fixing the rate of assessment under a measure which must leave considerable discretionary power. In such commissioners several qualifications are in a particular manner desirable. They ought to be persons of a respectable situation in life; as far as possible removed from any suspicion of partiality, or any kind of undue influence; men of integrity and independence. From the experience which we have had of the benefits derived from the voluntary exertions of such a body of commissioners, we may be able to ascertain in what classes to look for men qualified for the important functions which the office would impose. Still, however, I should consider it necessary to vary somewhat from the mode pursued in forming the commissioners of the land-tax. After much consideration, then, it occurs to me that, out of the commissioners appointed under the act for assessing the land-tax, a certain proportion should be taken with given qualifications. I should think that no man should be admitted to act as commissioner for the purposes to be afterwards specified, who does not possess 300*l.* per annum. To these, other persons of similar qualifications should be added, and the list so framed to be referred to the grand jury, or those who have served on the two last grand juries to form the commissioners. In case the party is dissatisfied with the decision of these commissioners, another body of commissioners shall be formed, to whom an appeal may be carried. In commercial towns some special provisions will be necessary, adapted to the nature of circumstances.

The next point for consideration, then, is the mode of contribution which shall be adopted. On this head it is my intention to propose, that no income under 60*l.* a year shall be called upon to contribute, and that the scale of modification up to 200*l.* a year, as in the assessed taxes, shall be introduced with restriction. The quota which will then be called for ought to amount to a full tenth of the contributor's income. The mode proposed of obtaining this contribution differs from that pursued in the assessed taxes, as instead of trebling their amount, the statement of income is to proceed from the party himself. In doing this

it is not proposed that income shall be distinctly laid open, but it shall only be declared that the assessment is beyond the proportion of a tenth of the income of the person on whom it is imposed. In this way I hope, that the disclosure at which many may revolt will be avoided, and at the same time every man will be under the necessity of contributing his fair and equal proportion. How then, it will be asked, is evasion and fraud to be checked? Knowing the difficulty of guessing what a man's real ability is, I do not think that the charge of fixing what is to be the rate, ought to be left to the commissioners. It would, I am persuaded, be most acceptable to the general feeling, to make it the duty of a particular officer, as surveyor, to lay before the commissioners such grounds of doubt, as may occur to him on the fairness of the rate at which a party may have assessed himself. These doubts, and the reasons on which they are founded, are then to be transmitted by the surveyor to the commissioners, in order that they may call for farther explanation from the person concerned. When in the case of the assessed taxes we have had so much experience of the evasions which have taken place; when we see the consequences which have resulted from a vague rule of exemption, and an indefinite principle of deduction; when we see that, by the different modes by which exemptions were regulated, persons, who probably would have shrunk from a direct fraud, have been able by different pretences to disguise to themselves the fair and adequate proportion which they ought to have contributed, it becomes more than ever necessary to render every case of exemption precise, and to guard every title to deduction from the danger of being abused. At the same time, under every disadvantage of the unrestricted application of deduction, and the easy commission of fraud, we have yet ample proof of our national wealth and general honesty. To prevent the country from suffering by dishonesty, to prevent the willing contributor from being taxed to the utmost proportion of his means, while his wealthy neighbour owes his exemption to meanness, it is necessary to guard with greater strictness against every chance of evasion. When doubts are entertained that a false statement has been given, it shall be competent for the commis-

sioners to call for a specification of income. It will be necessary to simplify and to state with precision the different proportions of income arising from land, from trade, annuity, or profession, which shall entitle to deduction. The commissioners are then to say whether they are satisfied with the statement which has been given. The officer or surveyor is to be allowed to examine and to report whether there appears reason to believe that the assessment is adequate. When the day of examination arrives, the commissioners shall hear what the surveyor and the party have to allege in support of the objection and the assessment, and examine other individuals. The schedule, which shall be drawn up in such a manner as accurately to define every case of exemption or deduction, shall be presented by the party, with his claim clearly specified. To the truth of the schedule he shall make oath. The party, however, shall not be compelled to answer; his books shall not be called for, nor his confidential clerks or agents examined. If, however, he declines to submit to the investigation of his books, and the examination of his clerks, and other means of ascertaining the truth, it shall be competent for the commissioners to fix the assessment, and their decision shall be final, unless he appeals to the higher commissioners. No disclosure is compulsory; but if the party is unwilling to disclose, he must acquiesce in the decision of the commissioners, who shall not be authorised to relieve without a full disclosure.

This, I am perfectly ready to admit, gives to the commissioners considerable power. But I think, Sir, I have stated enough to shew to the committee, that, unless some such powers be afforded under this act, the real and substantial effect of the measure will be entirely defeated. I think, too, I have proved, that commissioners, selected in the manner I have described, are as likely to be as free from all undue influence, and to act with as much integrity and honour, as any other set of men whatever. If, however, a better mode should be suggested, so far from opposing it, I shall consider it as a melioration and improvement of my plan. With respect to the information which may be communi-

cated to the commissioners, I should propose that they shall be strictly sworn not to disclose such information, nor to avail themselves of it for any other purpose separate from the execution of the act. If any statement, however, should be made upon oath, which the commissioners shall think to be false, and which they may wish to bring to a trial, it must be obvious to the committee that then there ought to be afforded the means of carrying on a prosecution for perjury. But on no other ground should there be any disclosure of facts by the commissioners, or any of the other officers appointed to carry the act into execution.

Having said thus much, Sir, having laid down these general principles and outlines, I cannot feel, that if commissioners of the description I have alluded to can be found, bound to execute their duty fairly and impartially, and sworn to secrecy—say, if such men can be selected, I cannot feel, however strong the objections may be against the disclosure of circumstances, that any statement made to such commissioners is liable to the general objection against public disclosures of the incomes and circumstances of individuals in a commercial country; at least, Sir, I am sure there is every disposition in the plan to guard against it. There is little danger, I conceive, that such commissioners will act partially, or will conduct themselves vexatiously; and, in my opinion, there does not remain any fair ground for jealousy in individuals, that a disclosure to such men will give to persons in the same line of life any advantages over them.

Perhaps, however, Sir, there is one class of men to whom it may be for the committee to determine whether the measure shall extend, and whether they ought not to remain exceptions to the act. Among the descriptions of persons to whom it may remain for the committee to consider whether a disclosure would not be detrimental, is the class which includes the poorest persons engaged in mercantile concerns; a class whose gains are most precarious, whose credit may be most doubtful, and most injured by a disclosure—I speak of the persons engaged in retail trades, to whom the assessed tax bill of last session gave great indulgencies, considering that the relief of abatement was one of which

they could not avail themselves, without greater inconvenience and injury to them, perhaps, than to persons of higher rank, and of a higher description of mercantile traders. I wish, therefore, the committee to consider whether it may not be as well to leave that class to pay on the mitigated rate of assessment to which they are liable under the assessed tax bill, as to subject them to the general rate of the present bill. It will also naturally enter into the consideration of the committee, what allowances or exemptions ought to be extended to other descriptions of persons. In the last act, certain allowances and abatements were granted to persons with large families. That principle it will certainly be proper to extend to this measure; and the only doubt which I entertain upon the subject is, whether it was carried far enough in the bill of last year. If this suggestion be admitted, it will naturally be a matter of doubt, whether the principle in the last bill, with respect to persons having no families, ought not to be extended. It will also very reasonably occur to the minds of the committee, that it is of the utmost importance to the due execution of the act, that, as far as the general principles can be laid down for establishing a rate of landed property, or what may be the proper average of incomes which are subject to average, the rates in the last act should be subject to correction and improvement. By the operation of these powers, and by the influence of these rules, we may expect to arrive more nearly at that fair proportion which each man ought to contribute towards the exigencies, and for the service of the country.

The next consideration to which I wish to direct the attention of the committee, is one liable to more difficulty and doubt, upon which gentlemen will be aware that every thing must be conjectural, but in which we are still not without lights to guide us—I mean as to the probable amount of a tax of this kind. The committee must be convinced, that what I shall state will be with doubt and uncertainty. I shall, however, submit to the view of the house the information I have collected, the authorities with which I am fortified, and the grounds upon which I proceed. And first, Sir, I shall proceed to state what is the first great object of

income. I mean the property derived from land. Upon this point I have consulted the best opinions, and authors of the most acknowledged merit. Upon the subject of the rent of the land of this country, Sir William Petty is the earliest author whom I have consulted, but upon whom I shall not dwell much. At the time he wrote, the rent of land was stated at eight millions. In a subsequent period, in the beginning of this century, and in the reign of Queen Anne, two writers of credit, Davenant and King, represented the rent of land to be 14,000,000*l*. However they differed on other points, on this they both agreed. Posterior to that time it was a received opinion, that a land-tax of four shillings in the pound was equivalent to about two shillings of what would be collected on the real rents of the kingdom, which were stated to amount to twenty millions. Full twenty years ago this was said by a writer, who was also a member of this house, and who, in a work he wrote, expressly recommended the very principle which I have submitted to the committee this day. The same estimate was stated, and the same opinion was countenanced by the authority of the celebrated author of the *Treatise on the Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith. He received it as a statement generally admitted, and sufficiently proved, that the rent of the land in the kingdom was twenty millions yearly. In a work published as long ago as the year 1774, Mr. Arthur Young, who had made agricultural pursuits his study, has advanced the same opinion. I mention all these authorities, to shew what has been the amount of the rent of land at different periods. I state them also to shew how great has been the increase upon it within the last ten years; but if any of those authorities should still not be free from exaggeration, the committee will at least see that any estimate which I may make is not likely to be one which is much beyond probability. I have had also, Sir, the advantage of other inquiries made expressly by a body who have made the cultivation of the land their peculiar province—I mean the board of agriculture. I allude more particularly to one report published by a person who made this part of the subject his study, the report drawn up by Mr. Middleton. All these, checked with

other examinations, state the whole amount of the cultivated land of the country to amount to little less than forty millions of acres. Any attempt to state what is the average value of these forty millions of acres, must be, the committee will see, in its nature extremely uncertain. As far as the inquiries I have made have enabled me to obtain any information, I find that many persons most conversant upon the subject believe the average value to be fifteen shillings per acre. I shall, however, take it at no more than twelve shillings and six-pence. In doing this, perhaps, I am rather under the mark, but I will put the average value at twenty-five millions a year. And gentlemen surely will see, that when I take the number of acres at forty millions, and the average value at only twelve shillings and six-pence per acre, the result is only an increase of five millions beyond what it was twenty years ago, and that therefore I cannot be considered as a very sanguine calculator. However, in this part of the subject, I desire the committee to bear in mind, that it will be proper to propose a reduction for all under 60*l.* a year, and that the same modifications be admitted into this act as in the assessed-tax bill—I mean the scale of income from 60*l.* to 200*l.* a year, and rising from a one hundred and twentieth part to a tenth. I mean on this account to assume a deduction of one-fifth, and to state the taxable property at only twenty millions.

I shall next proceed to state that part of income from land which belongs to the tenant. I propose to value every man according to his rent, making only a deduction for repairs. What I shall suggest for the further consideration of the committee, is three-fourths of the rack rent which the tenant pays to the landlord. The value of the income from land which belongs to the tenant I take at nineteen millions; the income to the landlord, as I have before said, at twenty-five millions. Instead of deducting only one-fifth, as I have suggested with respect to the landlord, I shall propose with respect to the tenant, to deduct two-thirds, leaving five millions as the taxable property of the tenants. The next income arising from land, is an income which is received neither by the landlord, nor by the tenant—I mean

what is received from tithes. This is an income enjoyed, as the committee know, either by lay impropriators, or by the clergy. The statements of the amount of the tithes are different; but I estimate the value of them to be five millions. If gentlemen suppose the amount of the cultivated land in the country to be forty millions of acres, and the average value to be twenty-five millions, they will find, I believe, my valuation to be very moderate: it is also Mr. Arthur Young's statement. Upon this subject of tithes, I propose to allow a deduction of one-fifth, though, perhaps, I may be considered as stating the reduction too largely; but gentlemen will consider the allowance to be made for poor livings.

Another species of property is that which arises from mines, and from shares in canals. There is also another property which I have not included in the rents of land, I mean the property arising from the sale of timber. I take all these three, the mines, canals, and timber, at three millions.

Another species of rent is that received for houses. I propose to proceed upon the rate which was followed in the act of last session. The committee are aware, that to establish accurately the rent of houses has ever been found to be impracticable, particularly of houses of the higher description of rent, which have always been undervalued. Out of the number of 700,000 houses, 250,000 are calculated to pay to the assessed taxes; I shall therefore take the rent of houses at no more than six millions.

In the early statements to which I have alluded, the profits gained by the professors of the law alone are stated at one million and a half; I cannot suppose that they are at all diminished. Allowing, besides, for all the branches of the medical profession, I conceive that two millions is a very small sum as the amount of the incomes arising from the professions.

The next head of income relates to the profits of retail trade: but there are persons of a certain description, with respect to whom it will be necessary to make some allowance. The reduction I shall propose to take at one eighth of the net sum of the profits of the trade of Great Britain, after which there will re-

main a sum of 5,000,000*l.* applicable to the general operation of the tax.

There will then remain another article of taxation, which is the income spent in this country by persons who derive it from other parts of the world; and unquestionably all who reside in this kingdom, and draw their means from sources out of it, cannot be dissatisfied at contributing to their own support and protection. Of this description, the only persons I shall think it necessary to estimate are those whose incomes arise from their having property in Ireland, and who reside in this country, and persons owning estates in the West-Indies, or receiving the interest of mortgages on estates in that part of the world. With respect to those persons whose incomes arise from Ireland, I have no accurate data in order to estimate the amount; but I believe it is the generally received opinion, that the property of persons of this description amounted to at least 1,000,000*l.* a considerable time since, and now, from the increase of rents, it may reasonably be estimated far beyond that sum. With respect to the incomes of estates in the West Indies, the total amount cannot be estimated at less than 7,000,000*l.* sterling, and far the greater amount is produced from the property of persons residing in Great Britain, who either own estates, or have mortgages upon them for which they receive interest. From that are to be deducted the amount of the exports carried out, and the charge of cultivating the estates in the West Indies; after which deduction, I estimate the produce of income in the West Indies at four millions, and I believe I run no danger of stating it too high. Thus it appears I may fairly estimate at five millions the whole produce of income arising beyond seas, and enjoyed by persons in this country.

The next description of property which will come under the consideration of the committee as a source for the proposed tax, is the income of persons not in trade. Under this head will be included annuities of all kinds, public and private mortgages, and income arising from money lent upon securities under various denominations. At the same time the committee however

will go along with me in seeing that, in estimating the general rental of the land of England, I have taken it with all its burdens, and consequently have included the mortgages. In the practical detail of the measure, it will come to be decided whether it shall fall on the land owner, or on the mortgagee. In respect, therefore, of this description of property, I do not now make any distinct estimate. Whatever is lent upon the security of land will naturally come forth in the process of this tax, and as we have no accurate means of judging of the amount of the mortgaged property in England, I avoid taking any particular sum under the distinct head. With respect to private annuities of another kind, it is also difficult to ascertain their amount. Not so with regard to public annuities; we have no difficulty of ascertaining the exact amount of the annuities paid by the public to individuals, and I shall have no hesitation in submitting to the committee, that when a general assessment upon income is to take place, no distinction ought to be made as to the sources from which that income may arise. There can be no fair objection taken by the stockholder upon the occasion; there can be no question of a breach of good faith, of national stipulation with the public creditor, by thus imposing upon him what every other subject of the realm is to incur. The public creditor enjoys his security under the most sacred obligations of the state, and the committee will do me the justice to recollect, that, whenever an idea has been started in debate, of imposing upon the stockholders, separately and distinctly, any sort of tax, I have been prepared to reprobate the attempt, as utterly inconsistent with good faith and public engagements. Parliament has always gone along with me in the feeling that no such tax ought to be levied upon them, and they have uniformly acted upon this feeling, on the principle, that, as the public creditors came forward and lent their money to the state in the moment of its necessity, while at the same time they bore, in common with every other description of his Majesty's subjects, the taxes on consumption, they were to be secured against any imposts, distinctly levelled at them as annuitants of the public; and the par-

liament has felt this more particularly from the recollection of the duty which they owe to persons who had embarked so much, and identified themselves so intimately with the state. Against any direct tax upon the stockholder, then, I am sure the committee, as well as myself, would set themselves in opposition; but the matter is materially reversed, when a tax is to be levied upon the income of every description of persons in the realm; when it is no longer in the power of the stockholder to say, I could avoid this tax by removing my property from the funds to landed security, or to trade; every argument against including him in the assessment is withdrawn. The protection yielded to the stockholder, is the same as to the landholder, the merchant, and the manufacturer. The duty, therefore, is the same, and every other description of persons in the country would have a right to complain, if, when they are called upon for a sacrifice of this extraordinary nature, so numerous a body of persons were to be exempted from the assessment. I am confident, therefore, that every gentleman who hears me, will agree that the principle of the measure is not liable to any imputation of breach of faith. It cannot be called a resumption of the annuity that has been granted to the public creditors, nor in the most remote degree an infringement of the contract that was originally made with them. They are, in this instance, only to do that which every other body of men within the kingdom are to do; they are to make a sacrifice of a part of their income to the necessities of the state, and they are to do it upon the principle of giving security and permanence to all which they possess. I have detained the committee longer upon this head than I should otherwise have done, because I am aware that objections may be lightly and loosely thrown out to this part of the measure. I should say to the stockholder, as one of the public, if you expect from the state the protection which is common to us all, you ought also to make the sacrifice which we are called upon to make. It is not peculiar to you, it does not belong to the quality of your income, but it is made general, and required from all; you could not embark your capital in any other spe-

cies of security in which it would not be subject to the same charge. I do not know what objection the stockholder could make to this appeal. I include, therefore, the public annuitants in the view of the proposed tax, and there is no difficulty in estimating the amount of this species of income. At the same time, it is to be taken into consideration, that all that part of the public annuities which have been redeemed by the nation, is to be exempted from the charge of the tax. Taking the amount of the redemption, therefore, at what it now appears to be, the rental of the public annuitants may be estimated at 15,000,000*l.*; but here, as in all the other cases, both of the land and rental, and of other sources of property, there will, of course, be admitted the same exemptions to all annuitants who have less than 60*l.* a year, and the same modifications to all who possess from 60*l.* to 200*l.* a year. At the same time it is to be considered, that these exemptions and modifications are only to apply to those individuals whose whole income amounts to less than 200*l.* a year. If persons possess incomes from various sources, they are to be calculated in the aggregate; for the exemption or the modification will not apply, if the whole income should not be under the stipulated sum. I am sure, that I shall over-rate the amount of these exemptions and modifications, when I deduct one-fifth from the sum that I have stated the public annuities to be; but I do not admit that deduction, and therefore state the total of the income from the public funds at 12,000,000*l.*

There now remain, Mr. chairman, the other great sources of trade to the inhabitants of this country;—the produce of trade, foreign and domestic: and this branch of income is, in its nature, more difficult of estimate than any other. We have, however, lights and aids by which we may come to a knowledge of a material part, at least, of this source of national wealth, I mean the produce of our foreign trade. By the recent acts which have been passed, the amounts of the imports and exports have been ascertained with such a degree of accuracy, as to enable us to form a tolerable judgment of the amount of the capital embarked in this branch of our trade, and, consequently, to form an esti-

mate of the profits accruing from it. By the late act for the insurance of produce and manufactures exported, as well as by the recent act of which I have spoken, for the laying a duty on convoys, we have been able, more clearly than heretofore, to ascertain the amount and value of this trade, since we have not only the estimate and calculation that is made by the revenue, but the declarations of the persons engaged in the trade themselves, upon which the duty is paid : and by these guides we are able to ascertain that the capital employed in this way is certainly not less than 80,000,000*l.* sterling. Less it cannot be by the proof of the insurance act, which has now lasted two years, but it may be considerably more, because it is a well-known thing that merchants stand a part of the risk themselves, and do not insure to the full amount of the goods they export. But taking the amount at 80,000,000*l.* the calculation corresponds with the view of our foreign commerce, which has been recently made by our most accurate calculators ; and in all these estimates I wish rather to be under than over the mark. I state the amount of the capital, therefore, embarked in our foreign trade at 80,000,000*l.* ; and assuming this as the capital, the next question is, what we ought to take as the profit to all the description of persons employed in carrying on this branch of our trade ? In estimating this, we must necessarily include in our view, not merely the merchant who exports, but all the orders and descriptions of persons from the manufacturer upwards, who are in any way connected with our export trade. Under this head come in the profits of brokerage, wharfage, and carriage, with all the other contributory trades connected with foreign commerce ; and I am sure the committee will agree with me, that I make a moderate calculation, when I estimate the average of the profits upon the capital of 80,000,000*l.* at 15 per cent. I take, therefore, 12,000,000*l.* as the income of all the persons connected with the foreign trade of this kingdom.

There now remains that which more than any other branch of our income baffles the power of scrutiny, and affords even very limited grounds for conjecture ; I mean the profits arising from

domestic trade and manufacture. Here the many descriptions of persons whose skill and industry are the source of income in all the progress of our arts and manufactures, from the first preparation of the rude and raw material to its state of perfection, serve to make calculation almost impossible from their variety and extent. Even here, however, we have some means of forming an idea. Of the general capital of 80,000,000*l.* employed in the foreign trade, it has been pretty accurately determined, that about 30,000,000*l.* are destined and employed in the export of the leading manufactures of England. I am sure, then, that the committee will go along with me in saying, that the amount of the capital and sum employed in internal trade must be four times the amount of our export of British manufactures. When we look at the vast machine of trade in all its parts, let any gentleman ask himself whether, in the woollen manufactures, cotton, linen, hardware, pottery, and in all the other great and leading branches of manufacture, there can be a less sum employed than four times the amount of that which is appropriated by the merchant for the purposes of exportation? Viewing all the enormous capital invested in domestic manufacture, I cannot take it at less than 120,000,000*l.*; and upon this capital I estimate the gain at no more than 15 per cent. making a sum of 18,000,000*l.* per annum of income.

There is one other description of income which, though it embraces a vast variety of individuals, is reducible to none of the former heads, but comes naturally to be included in the article of domestic trade; I mean artisans, architects, brewers, distillers, builders, brickmakers, masons, carpenters, and all that innumerable class of persons who, by skill in their professions, draw their incomes from the general prosperity of the country. The committee, from their general knowledge of the kingdom, will at once perceive how numerous and how varied this class of persons must be, and how utterly impossible it is to arrive at an accurate criterion of the general amount of their gains. I am sure, however, that they will agree with me that I understate it, when I take it at 10,000,000*l.* per annum. I thus estimate the whole amount of our internal manufactures and trade at 28,000,000*l.* a year.

I have thus rapidly gone through all the distinct branches of national rental, and of national profits, from which we have to derive the tax that I mean to propose to you, without presuming to think that I have been able to do it with that accuracy of detail which can only be derived from practice, or with that certainty upon which you ought to repose. I have, however, through the whole been anxious to understate the amount of the estimate as collected from the best sources of calculation, and to overrate the exemptions and deductions that it would be necessary to make from each. The committee, who have gone along with me in my details, will see that I make the whole sum of annual rental and profits, after making the deductions which I think reasonable, 102,000,000*l.* sterling.

For the sake of greater clearness, I will recapitulate the heads in the same order that I have followed:

The land rental, then, after deducting one-fifth, I estimate at - - - - -	£. 20,000,000
The tenant's rental of land, deducting two-thirds of the rack rent, I take at - - - - -	6,000,000
The amount of tythes, deducting one-fifth - - -	4,000,000
The produce of mines, canal-navigation, &c. deducting one-fifth - - - - -	3,000,000
The rental of houses, deducting one-fifth - - -	5,000,000
The profits of professions - - - - -	2,000,000
The rental of Scotland, taking it at one-eighth of that of England - - - - -	5,000,000
The income of persons resident in Great Britain, drawn from possessions beyond seas - - -	5,000,000
The amount of annuities from the public funds, after deducting one-fifth for exemptions and modifications - - - - -	12,000,000
The profits on the capital employed in our foreign commerce - - - - -	12,000,000
The profits on the capital employed in domestic trade, and the profits of skill and industry -	28,000,000
In all	£. 102,000,000

Upon this sum a tax of 10 per cent. is likely to produce 10,000,000*l.* a year, and this is the sum which is likely to result from the measure, and at which I shall assume it. I flatter myself that I have been extremely careful not to overstate any part of the sources.

Now, supposing that ten millions is the sum thus collected, gentlemen will recollect that, in the last session of parliament, the assessed taxes were the only part of the public resources which were mortgaged for the sum of 8,000,000*l.* borrowed for the public service in 1797. I should think it my duty, therefore, that the sum now proposed to be raised in lieu of the assessed taxes, should, after its appropriation to the supplies of the present year, remain as a pledge for the discharge of that sum for which the assessed taxes were a security, and also for the discharge of the loan of the present year, beyond what will be paid out of the sinking fund. Taking the assessed taxes at four millions, they would have been mortgaged for two years after peace;—and thus the advantage of this measure is this, that no greater sums will be raised on any individuals than those which have been hitherto paid, at least by such as have rendered the measure of the legislature effectual; they will be relieved of a greater than a proportional share of their burthen, and the duration of the burden will not be half the time. This is a recommendation of the justice and expediency which must be felt by the people at large. But it does not stop here; it looks anxiously to the alleviation of the burdens of the country, by a great temporary exertion; it looks to the equality of the tax, and the general efficacy of the measure, conscious that on them depends our success in the great cause in which we are engaged.—That it is to furnish the means of providing for the debt created in two years, within the same period we formerly provided for the debt created in one. In the mode of applying the sum now to be raised, there are different ways. The sum which the assessed taxes were applied to discharge last year amounted to eight millions; it would be only to borrow a sum equal to the debt to supply the deficiency; but it occurs, however, to me, that a more simple and direct mode is, to apply this sum, in the first instance, to the supplies of the year, but at the same time to enact, that

the tax shall continue till it has discharged the debt for which the assessed taxes were mortgaged, and then to make a farther charge for what may be borrowed beyond what the sinking fund will discharge.

Supposing this ten per cent. on income produces 10,000,000*l.* the period when I should propose it to take effect would be the 5th of April next. I should propose the repeal of the former assessed taxes at the same period; but, from the calculation I have made, four millions and a half will be raised from the first of February, 1798, to the first of February, 1799. It would, therefore, be more beneficial to the object I have in view to commence the operation of this new measure at an earlier period, because of the benefit of the increased rate of taxation; but there will be the addition of what will come in under the assessed taxes, which will amount to 700,000*l.* Thus, there will be raised 10,700,000*l.* But this is not applicable to the whole of the subject; for gentlemen will recollect, that the interest of the 8,000,000*l.* was also charged on the assessed taxes. The interest will continue in the course of the present year, to which also is to be added the interest of whatever loan may be made this year. This will amount to about one million five hundred thousand pounds, which leaves the sum of nine millions two hundred thousand pounds, as applicable to the services of the present year. This aid would be all that is necessary to furnish the ways and means for the supplies, except as to the sum of twenty-four millions. Fourteen millions, therefore, is the sum necessary to be raised by loan; of which, however, four millions and a half is discharged by the operation of the sinking fund, consequently nine millions and a half is the whole sum to be added to the national debt. I wish, therefore, to lay this down as a principle, that nine millions and a half is the sum to be raised this year, for which I should propose to charge as a mortgage the income tax, after discharging the former mortgage. This gives a general view of the amount of the services of the year, and the ways and means to defray them. I have also stated, to the best of my power, the possible amount of every article proposed as the subject of taxation.

I trust that it will not be necessary for me to go into any detail of argument to convince the committee of the advantages of the beneficial mode adopted last session, of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year. The propriety of the measure has been recognized, and felt in a way the most gratifying to the feelings and to the pride of every Englishman. The principle has been proved to be the most wise and and beneficial, though in the manner of carrying it into practice it has been so shamefully and grossly evaded. The experience which we have had, points out the propriety of correcting the errors of that plan, and of enforcing and extending the principle. If we have been able, from the benefits of that measure, so evaded and crippled, to do so much, it is obviously our duty to seek for the means of perfecting the plan upon which we are set out; and if we can find regulations and checks against the abuses that have been committed, it is surely wise and proper that they should be made to apply to a more general and extensive scheme than that which we have already tried. It no longer rests upon theory, or upon reasoning; it is recommended to us by the surest test of experience; and if, by the efficacy of this plan, we have been able to disappoint the hopes of the enemy;—to rise above all the attempts which they made to disturb our domestic tranquillity;—to remove the apprehensions of the despondent, and to shew them that all their fears of our being unable to continue the contest, were vain;—to assert the high and proud distinction which we took in the maintenance of genuine government and social order;—if we have been able thereby to animate the public spirit of Europe, to revive its dismayed energy, and to give a turn to the political aspect of the world, favourable to the cause of humanity, shall we not persevere in a course which has been so fruitful of good? If we have proved that, at the end of the sixth year of war, unsubdued by all the exertions and sacrifices we have made, our commerce is flourishing beyond the example of any year even of peace; if our revenues are undiminished; if new means of vigour are daily presenting themselves to our grasp; if our efforts have been crowned with the most perfect

success; if the public sentiment be firm and united in the justice and necessity of the cause in which we are embarked; if every motive to exertion continues the same, and every effort we have made in the cause is a source only of exultation and pride to the heart; if, by the efficacy of those efforts, we have now the expectation of accomplishing the great object of all our sacrifices and all our labours; if despondency be dissipated at home, and confidence created abroad, shall we not persevere in a course so fairly calculated to bring us to a happy issue? Let us do justice to ourselves. It is not merely owing to the dazzling events of the campaign that we are indebted for the proud station in which we now stand. Great and glorious as those achievements have been, which cannot fail to be a source of exultation to every British bosom, I shall not detract from the high renown of all those persons to whose skill, vigour, and determination, we are indebted for the achievements that have astonished and aroused Europe, when I say, that it is not altogether owing to them that we now feel ourselves in a situation so proud and consoling. The grand and important changes which have been effected in Europe, are not merely to be ascribed to the promptitude, vigilance, skill, and vigour, of our naval department, whose merits no man can feel, or can estimate, more highly than I do; nor to the heroism, zeal, patriotism, and devotion, of our transcendant commanders—and I speak particularly of that great commander * whose services fill every bosom with rapturous emotion, and who will never cease to derive from the gratitude of his countrymen the tribute of his worth—nor is it to the unparalleled perseverance, valour, and wonders performed by our gallant fleets, which have raised the British name to a distinction unknown even to her former annals, that we are to ascribe all the advantages of our present posture. No, we must also do justice to the wisdom, energy, and determination of the parliament who have furnished the means, and the power, by which all the rest was sustained and accomplished. Through

* Lord Nelson.

them all the departments of his Majesty's government had the means of employing the force whose achievements have been so brilliant; through the wisdom of parliament the resources of the country have been called forth, and its spirit embodied in a manner unexampled in its history. By their firmness, magnanimity, and devotion to the cause, not merely of our own individual safety, but of the cause of mankind in general, we have been enabled to stand forth the saviours of the earth. No difficulties have stood in our way; no sacrifices have been thought too great for us to make; a common feeling of danger has produced a common spirit of exertion, and we have cheerfully come forward with a surrender of a part of our property as a salvage, not merely for recovering ourselves, but for the general recovery of mankind. We have presented a phenomenon in the character of nations.

It has often been thought, and has been the theme of historians, that as nations became mercantile, they lost in martial spirit what they gained in commercial avidity; that it is of the essence of trade to be sordid, and that high notions of honour are incompatible with the prosecution of traffic. This hypothesis has been proved to be false; for in the memorable era of the past year Great Britain has exhibited the glorious example of a nation shewing the most universal spirit of military heroism, at a time when she had acquired the most flourishing degree of national commerce. In no time of the proudest antiquity could the people of Great Britain exhibit a more dignified character of martial spirit than they have during the last year, when they have also risen to the greatest point of commercial advantage; and, Mr. Chairman, they are not insensible of the benefits, as well as of the glory, they have acquired; they know and feel that the most manly course has also been the most prudent, and they are sensible that, by bravely resisting the torrent with which they were threatened, instead of striking balances on their fate, and looking to the averages of profit and loss, on standing out, or of yielding to the tempest, they have given to themselves not merely security, but lustre and fame. If they

had, on the contrary, submitted to purchase a suspension of danger and a mere pause of war, they feel that they could only have purchased the means of future and more deplorable mischief, marked with the stamp of impoverishment and degradation; they feel therefore, that, in pursuing the path which duty and honour prescribed, they have also trod in the path of prudence and economy. They have secured to themselves permanent peace, and future repose, and have given an animating example to the world of the advantages of vigour, constancy, and union. If the world shall not be disposed to take the benefit of this example, Great Britain has at least the consolation to know, that she has given them the power. And if I were disposed, Sir, to pay regard to drier and colder maxims of policy, I should say, that every regard even to prudent economy would point out the course which we have taken, as the most advantageous for a people to pursue. It will be manifest to every gentleman on the slightest consideration of the subject, that, in the end, the measure of raising the supplies within the year is the cheapest and the most salutary course that a wise people can pursue; and when it is considered that there is a saving of at least one twelfth upon all that is raised, gentlemen will not suffer a superstitious fear, and jealousy of the danger of exposing the secrecy of income, to combat with a measure that is so pregnant with benefits to the nation. If gentlemen will take into their consideration the probable duration of peace and war, calculated from the experience of past times, they will be convinced of the immeasurable importance of striving to raise the supplies within the year, rather than accumulating a permanent debt. The experience of the last hundred, fifty, or forty years, will shew how little confidence we can have in the duration of peace, and it ought to convince us, how important it is to establish a system, that will prepare us for every emergency, give stability to strength, and perpetual renovations to resource. I think, I could make it apparent to gentlemen, that in any war, of the duration of six years, the plan of funding all the expenses to be incurred in carrying it on, would leave at the end of it a

greater burden permanently upon the nation than would be sustained, than they would have to incur for the six years only of its continuance, and one year beyond it, provided that they made the sacrifice of a tenth of their income. In the old, unwise, and destructive way of raising the supplies by a permanent fund, without any provision for its redemption, a war so carried on entails the burden upon the age and upon their posterity for ever. This has, to be sure, in a great measure, been done away and corrected, by the salutary and valuable system which has been adopted of the redemption fund. But that fund cannot accomplish the end in a shorter period than forty years, and during all that time the expenses of a war so funded must weigh down and press upon the people. If, on the contrary, it had at an early period of our history been resolved to adopt the present mode of raising the supplies within the year; if, for instance, after the peace of Aix la Chapelle, the scheme of redemption even had been adopted, and persevered in to this time, we should not now, for the seventh year of the war, have had more to raise from the pockets of the people than what we have now to pay of permanent taxes, together with about a fourth of what it would be necessary to lay on in addition for this year. Fortunately we have at last established the redemption fund: the benefits of it are already felt; they will every year be more and more acknowledged; and in addition to this it is only necessary, that instead of consulting a present advantage, and throwing the burden, as heretofore, upon posterity, we shall fairly meet it ourselves, and lay the foundation of a system that shall make us independent of all the future events of the world.

I am sure that, in deliberating upon the advantages of this system, gentlemen whose liberal and exalted views go beyond the mere present convenience of the moment, and are not limited to the period of the interest which they may themselves take in public affairs, or even to the period of their own existence, but look with a provident affection to the independence and happiness of a generation unborn, will feel and recognise the wisdom of a system that has for its principle the permanency of British gran-

deur. You will feel that it is not only to the splendour of your arms, to the achievements of your fleets, that you are indebted for the high distinction which you at present enjoy ; but also to the wisdom of the councils you have adopted in taking advantage of the influence which your happy constitution confers beyond the example of any other people, and by which you have given a grand and edifying lesson to dismayed Europe, that safety, honour, and repose, must ever depend upon the energy with which danger is met and resisted. You have shewn the power of self-defence, which is permanent and unassailable : standing upon the principles you have assumed, the wild and extravagant hopes of the enemy will be thwarted ; Europe will be aroused and animated to adopt a course so honourable ; and surely with the means of persevering thus obvious, you will not think it prudent or necessary to shrink from the principles you have adopted, or take shelter in a peace which might be obtained by a more temporizing conduct, but which would neither be safe nor durable. But, Sir, I cannot encourage any sentiment so degrading ; I feel in common with every gentleman who hears me, the proud situation in which we have been placed, and the importance it has given us in the scale of nations. The rank that we now hold, I trust, we shall continue to cherish, and that, pursuing the same glorious course, we shall all of us feel it to be a source of pride and consolation that we are the subjects of the king of Great Britain. I will not detain you longer, Sir, but will move for the first of my series of resolutions in carrying the plan of taxation into execution, which I have endeavoured to detail.

The resolutions were as follow :

“ Resolved,

“ That it is the opinion of this committee, that so much of an act made in the last session of parliament, intituled, ‘ An act for granting to his Majesty an aid and contribution for the prosecution of the War,’ as charges any person with an additional duty in proportion to the amount of the rates or duties to which, prior to the 5th day of April, 1798, such person was assessed, according to any assessment made in pursuance of any act of parliament in force at the time of passing the said act of the last session, be repealed.

“ Resolved,

“ That it is the opinion of this committee, that, towards raising the supply granted to his Majesty, there be charged annually, during a term to be limited, the several rates and duties following, upon all income arising from property in Great Britain, belonging to any of his Majesty's subjects, although not resident in Great Britain; and upon all income of every person residing in Great Britain, and of every body politic or corporate, or company, fraternity, or society of persons, whether corporate or not corporate, in Great Britain, whether any such income shall arise from lands, tenements, or hereditaments, wheresoever the same shall be situated in Great Britain, or elsewhere; or from any kind of personal property, or other property whatever; or from any profession, office, employment, trade, or vocation; that is to say,

One one-hundred-and-twentieth part of such income, if the same shall amount unto 60*l.* per annum, and shall be under 65*l.* per annum.

One ninety-fifth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 65*l.* but shall be under 70*l.*

One seventieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 70*l.* but shall be under 75*l.*

One sixty-fifth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 75*l.* but shall be under 80*l.*

One sixtieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 80*l.* but shall be under 85*l.*

One fifty-fifth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 85*l.* but shall be under 90*l.*

One fiftieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 90*l.* but shall be under 95*l.*

One forty-fifth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 95*l.* but shall be under 100*l.*

One fortieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 100*l.* but shall be under 105*l.*

One thirty-eighth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 105*l.* but shall be under 110*l.*

One thirty-sixth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 110*l.* but shall be under 115*l.*

One thirty-fourth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 115*l.* but shall be under 120*l.*

One thirty-second part of such income, if the same shall amount to 120*l.* but shall be under 125*l.*

One thirtieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 125*l.* but shall be under 130*l.*

One twenty-eighth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 130*l.* but shall be under 135*l.*

One twenty-sixth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 135*l.* but shall be under 140*l.*

One twenty-fourth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 140*l.* but shall be under 145*l.*

One twenty-second part of such income, if the same shall amount to 145*l.* but shall be under 150*l.*

One twentieth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 150*l.* but shall be under 155*l.*

One nineteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 155*l.* but shall be under 160*l.*

One eighteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 160*l.* but shall be under 165*l.*

One seventeenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 165*l.* but shall be under 170*l.*

One sixteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 170*l.* but shall be under 175*l.*

One fifteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 175*l.* but shall be under 180*l.*

One fourteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 180*l.* but shall be under 185*l.*

One thirteenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 185*l.* but shall be under 190*l.*

One twelfth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 190*l.* but shall be under 195*l.*

One eleventh part of such income, if the same shall amount to 195*l.* but shall be under 200*l.*

And one tenth part of such income, if the same shall amount to 200*l.* or upwards.

The resolutions were agreed to, and the report was ordered to be received on the following day.

December 14, 1798.

MR. HOBART brought up the report of the committee on the bill for imposing a general tax upon income. On the question "that this report be now taken into further consideration,"

MR. PITT, in reply to Sir John Sinclair, and some other members, who had expressed their decided hostility to the bill, spoke to the following effect :

SIR,—Impressed as I am with the conviction that there never was a subject of greater importance in all its aspects, and in all

its consequences, agitated within these walls, I should not have thought it incumbent upon me, in the present stage of the business, to have troubled you with any observations, were there not some points which have been touched upon to-night, which I am desirous, as soon as possible, to place in their proper point of view. What has been urged by some gentlemen who spoke in the course of the debate, while it could not be considered fairly as argument, was directed in such a manner against the farther progress of the measure, was so calculated to excite prejudice, and to beget misconception, that it demands some degree of notice. It is a satisfaction to me to find that the propriety of raising a certain part of the supplies within the year has in general been conceded. If we can judge from what has appeared to-night, there is nobody in the house, except the honourable baronet * who opened the debate, who is disposed to contest the principle. I am thus relieved from the necessity of detaining the house with any argument upon that subject, or saying any thing in reply to one solitary antagonist by whom the principle was denied. Whatever authority may belong to that individual member, and no man has more, the worthy baronet himself seemed to rest entirely upon that authority, as he did not add a single argument in support of his position. The house then will no doubt be willing to dispense with any argument upon this branch of the question.

There were some others, however, who, entering upon the consideration of the subject with liberal professions of approbation, and a firm conviction of the necessity of great and extraordinary exertion in the cause in which we are engaged; admitting the benefits which might be derived both in present vigour and permanent resources, from the plan of raising a great part of the supplies within the year, yet thought themselves at liberty, not after full consideration of the whole details, not after weighing maturely the regulations by which this great principle is to be carried into execution, and followed up with effect, not after long and sincere endeavours to remedy what was defective, and to im-

* Sir John Sinclair.

prove what was wrong, reluctantly to dismiss the measure as impracticable to the end proposed, but, in the first instance, hastily, peremptorily, and impatiently, to shut the door against all improvement, and to oppose all farther deliberation. Although agreeing in the principle, and aware as they must be that a measure of such magnitude and importance must depend much upon the arrangement of details, and the regulation of provisions, they seem resolved to check all attempt to bring these points again into consideration. Confessing the necessity of great and vigorous efforts for the salvation of the country, in which some of them, now for the first time, have tardily discovered, that our safety is involved, they do not wait to reject the measure upon any ground of final and invincible objection, but they come forward to resist it in the very outset, previous to a mature examination of its details, and a sincere endeavour to correct its provisions.

The honourable gentleman who spoke last* approves of the principle of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, but he declares himself an enemy to any plan of rendering that principle effectual by a general tax. The house will, no doubt, think this a most valuable concession of the honourable gentleman! If it be necessary for the effort which we are called upon to make, if it be essential to the firm establishment of public credit, to the future prosperity of the empire, to obtain that supply which is requisite for the vigorous prosecution of the contest, it is evident that it must be obtained by a sudden tax immediately productive. If it is impossible, by an increase of the existing taxes on consumption, by introducing evils ten times more severe than those which are imputed to this measure, it is evident that nothing can realize the principle but some extraordinary and general tax. If the honourable gentleman, as I perceive he does, admits that such an increase of the taxes on consumption as would produce ten millions within the year is impracticable, it follows that there is no other mode but a tax upon property, so far as it can be discovered. We must lay the contribution, then,

* Mr. W. Smith.

either upon capital or on income. From this general operation, however, the honourable gentleman would exempt all those whom he is pleased to call exclusively the useful classes, and lay the whole of the weight on what he calls the useless class. In the class of useless the honourable gentleman has thought proper to rank all the proprietors of land, those men who form the line which binds and knits society together—those on whom, in a great measure, the administration of justice, and the internal police of the country depends;—those men from whom the poor receive employment, from whom agriculture derives its improvement and support, and to whom, of course, commerce itself is indebted for the foundation on which it rests. Yet this class the honourable gentleman thinks proper to stigmatize as useless drones, of no estimation or merit in the eyes of society. When the consequences with which this light flippant theory, the offspring of mere temporary unthinking policy, would be attended, are fairly considered, the honourable gentleman will find that his distinction between useful and useless classes is as little founded in truth, as the practical system he founds upon it would be consistent with the general interest of those whom he thinks entitled to peculiar favour. The question then is, whether capital or income be the proper object of contribution? The honourable gentleman says that capital is the criterion which ought to be adopted in the case of the commercial man, and income where it is derived from land. Taking for granted, that the principles of the honourable gentleman were well founded, no less than three-fourths of the whole income liable to contribution is calculated to arise from this source. Even upon his own argument, then, he ought not to consider this measure as so incurable as to refuse going into the committee. If, then, he is sincere in his profession of desire to facilitate the raising of a considerable part of the supplies within the year, why should he refuse to proceed farther in a measure which is at least capable of embracing three fourths of his object; and in other parts susceptible of alteration and improvement? If, however, what has been so universally recognised as important to be done, is to be done effec-

tually, and the great consideration is, on which of these leading objects it will be most advantageous to the public, and least inconvenient to the classes of contribution to impose this general and comprehensive tax, I am afraid, that to that very plan, which he himself thinks preferable, those objections on which he rested the desponding hope, that the country neither could, nor would submit to the measure, would apply with aggravated force. Every objection, which he so long and vehemently urged against the danger of disclosure, will apply to those new theories of policy on which he would act. The honourable gentleman says, he is against disclosure. How, then, is he to ascertain the amount of that commercial capital, the profits of which he thinks might justly be made to contribute? Would he be contented with that loose declaration, which experience has proved to be so favourable to evasion? Would he recognise the justice of a principle, which he would utterly defeat and nullify by the provisions he recommends to carry it into effect? What then does he do to support that great cause, to invigorate those extraordinary efforts which are necessary for our success in a contest, which all but a few, who but lately have got some few lights, have long considered to be connected with our existence? Yet, when appearing for the first time as a proselyte to the cause of his country and of mankind, though standing in the new character of a convert, he still retains so much of the bias of his old opinions, that he denies the means of rendering those measures effective, which he acknowledges to be indispensable, and carrying into practice that principle which he professes to approve.

The real dispute between us, then, is nothing but a matter of detail. The greater part of the honourable gentleman's speech was founded upon objections to the provisions of the bill; and many of his objections were either utterly unfounded in any thing it contains, or they were of such a nature as to admit of being corrected in the committee. In arguing the matter in this way, in the present stage, the honourable gentleman could be regular only upon a point of strict form. He knows very well that the

bill went through the committee to get the blanks filled up without undergoing any discussion in that stage, and that it was intended to submit it at a future period to the detailed examination of a committee. But granting that the present was, in a fair view of the subject, the proper stage for the discussion of points of detail, let us see what are the objections which, in the honourable gentleman's estimation, are so fatal to the measure. To the main objection, which he urged so repeatedly, and with so much acrimony, it may easily be answered, that the honourable gentleman assumes what is not in the bill. It seemed to be taken up merely to afford him an opportunity of embellishing his discourse with the violent invective and offensive epithet by which it was distinguished. I allude to what was stated respecting the character and duties of the surveyor to be appointed under the bill. I will not recapitulate the odious description which the honourable gentleman applied to the persons who were to act in this capacity. What is the purpose—what is the tendency of such invective? What can be the effect of this reproachful language, thus indiscriminately applied, but to bring into discredit those officers under the revenue, without which it could not be collected, and without which public business must be at a stand? The honourable gentleman says, that the surveyor is at liberty to surcharge to any amount, and pending the appeal to which this surcharge gives rise, the tax will continue to be levied on the whole of the demand, including the surcharge. What is the remedy which the honourable gentleman discovers for this? He tell us, in alluding to a remark of an honourable baronet,* that the discussion of the appeal might be rendered so intricate as to consume six, or even twelve months. This objection the honourable gentleman urges triumphantly, at the very time too that he states it to be the mode which a person surcharged will adopt for his relief, at the very moment when he is compelled to acquiesce in the payment of a surcharge, from which he takes care that it shall be impossible for the commissioners of appeal to relieve him! Such an argument is the consequence which is

* Sir Francis Baring.

stated. In fact, however, it so happens, that no such grievance can exist. The surveyor's surcharge is not acted upon in the first instance, unless confirmed by the commissioners. The surveyor has no discretion whatever to add to the charge on which the contributor shall be compelled to pay. The objections of the honourable gentleman, instead of operating against the bill *in toto*, demonstrate the necessity of going into the committee, that the bill may obtain a full consideration, and a fair discussion.

As to the general declamation upon the character and function of the surveyor, whom some gentlemen are pleased to consider in the odious light of a spy, it is a matter for the committee to adjust the powers and the duties with which he shall be entrusted. Is this, however, any argument for the immediate rejection of the bill? Does the honourable gentleman really think that no precaution whatever ought to be taken to avoid those scandalous evasions which there is but too much reason to expect may be attempted? But it is maintained by the honourable gentleman, that no evasions have taken place to defeat the operation of the assessed tax bill which passed last session. He is peculiarly fortunate in the instances which have occurred to him, with respect to the patriotism of his friends; but he has rated their zeal beyond the mark. It is rather singular that he has not taken the opportunity of extolling their liberality in subscribing to the voluntary contributions. The observations made by the friends of government are, however, of a very different kind. His must have been a chosen circle, yet others were as large as the honourable gentleman's, before the new lights broke in upon him. But notwithstanding the assertion, I must say, that great and notorious instances of the concealment of property have occurred, the check provided by the legislature has been found insufficient to produce any adequate end, and the declarations which have been given in, have, on various occasions, eluded the expected operation of the act. Is it not then a matter of great concernment—is it not a subject worthy of grave deliberation, to consider what means may be devised to render

the measure proposed as efficient as possible to the public service? The surveyor is not to be a person on whose discretion any assessment is to depend: he is to *assist* the commissioners with *information*, and to discharge that duty which his oath prescribes, of preventing evasion where it might be within his knowledge that it was attempted. It is said, in proof of the importance of the surveyor's office, that they have great influence with the commissioners in other matters where the revenue is concerned; but, when the character of the commissioners is taken into view, this remark will prove that, instead of that profligate, worthless class, which the honourable gentleman describes, they are men who recommended themselves by the propriety of their conduct and the performance of their duty. But, says the honourable gentleman, the surveyor is the only man whom we consider as likely to be bound by his oath. Yet is there no distinction between the cases? Is the temptation to perjure the same? Has the man who is sworn to the performance of his duty the same reason to disregard it, which the man has who is endeavouring to avoid the payment of money to the state? What, then, is required?—A *particular* statement of income, to guard against the evasion which was practised when a *general* statement was only required. What is it but the means of correcting those frauds which every man's observation but the honourable gentleman's had ascertained to be prevalent? The honourable gentleman speaks, too, of the surveyor's power to extract from the books of public bodies. Here the honourable gentleman, from not attending to the bill itself, is entirely mistaken. The surveyor has no such power; he is to make extracts from, and to have access to, the public books, to which at present even any person may easily procure access for any purpose, even of mere curiosity. Might not any body now procure information how much any mercantile house possesses in the three per cents.? The surveyor, then, is authorized to suggest doubts, to collect information; but he has no right whatever to ask questions of the party surcharged, or to have any inspection of his books. Does not the honourable gentleman, however, perceive that all these

points are proper subjects for consideration in a committee, where it is perfectly competent to move any alteration which gentlemen may think necessary?

As to the criterion of the general tax, it has likewise been objected to the details, that the application is unequal in respect to the nature of income, its duration, &c. Although I do not intend to enter so much into the discussion of the provisions of the bill, I am anxious to remove those erroneous conceptions which are entertained upon this subject. Here I cannot help remarking, that the arguments of the honourable gentleman, on this branch, suppose that it is necessary to correct the inequalities which distinguish the mode in which all taxes are imposed. If such be the sentiment of the honourable gentleman, his objection goes a great deal farther than the bill before the house. The inequalities of which he complains arise out of the nature of society, and the distribution of its rank, and the classification of its property. If he attempts to remedy what he in this considers as urgent, he will attempt something which has never yet been done by any system of taxation, something which springs from theories of legislation, neither founded in wisdom nor justified by experience. I proceed to explain my meaning more fully. The honourable gentleman says, that if two persons have each 500*l.* per annum, one of which derives his income from land, the other from industry, they ought not to be both taxed equally at 50*l.* He assumes, that each having 450*l.* a year left, the impost is unequal. What does the new tax do? Are they not left in relation to each other precisely as they were before? The tax creates no new inequality. The justice or injustice remain precisely as they were. To complain of this inequality is to complain of the distribution of property; it is to complain of the constitution of society. To attempt to remedy it, would be to follow the example of that daring rabble of legislators in another country, from whom the honourable gentleman borrowed some of his political principles, and which, though he now reprobates, he still seems inclined to follow up. To think of taxing these two species of incomes in a different ratio, would be to attempt

what the nature of society will not admit; what has never been practised in the course of four thousand years. But on what foundation does this principle, which the honourable gentleman has broached, rest? Where is the clear inequality on which he so vehemently insists? Is the industry of the artist, the manufacturer, the mechanic, less the creature of the protection of law, less involved in the great contest in which we are engaged, less likely to be overthrown in any disasters of the state, than the income which arises from land? I heard, with satisfaction, the argument of the honourable baronet* behind me, though I cannot, perhaps, go along with him to the extent to which he carried it; of this, certainly I am sure, that if all classes in this country are not strictly equal sharers in the advantages which the constitution of this country affords, there are none who ought not to contribute in proportion to their means for the public defence in a quarrel, in which the comforts and the happiness of all are so deeply involved, unless when the compassion of the legislature forbears to extend the scale of taxation to those who are in the lowest class of income. The principle of the honourable gentleman then is entirely unfounded. In imputing to him that extravagant principle, which strikes at the whole distribution of property in society, I am sure I do nothing which his own arguments do not justify; nor do I think I am mistaken in stating those principles, for the honourable gentleman was particularly careful to repeat his monstrous propositions over and over again, in proportion as he saw that they were disgusting to the feelings of the house. That industry ought to be encouraged and promoted, it a sentiment which nobody will dispute. It should be remembered, however, that this, among many others, is a case in which virtue is its own reward. What, then, is the true state of the argument? An income of 500*l.* from land may be equal to about 15,000*l.* so that a man is contented to take three per cent. for his capital. In the funds, according to circumstances, and in the different funds, a man may have five, or even six per cent. If he lays out his capital in trade,

* Sir William Young.

and adds to it his own industry, he gets from 10 to 15 per cent. Now, if you leave the proportion undisturbed, what is it that forms the encouragement to lay out money in trade and manufactures, but the improved produce derived from industry? This is the incentive which enflames enterprise, and stimulates ingenuity. Allow that order, under which your commerce and your arts have risen to such an unexampled height of prosperity to remain undisturbed, and you preserve that incentive, that encouragement, and that reward, on which industry depends. I much doubt, indeed, whether any table which the honourable gentleman could form from all the new political lights which he ever received, could lay the foundation more secure or more permanent for arts, commerce, and every kind of exertion, than that on which they have grown so great, and flourished so long.

There is another argument of great authority, which gentlemen employ; an argument which, for some time past, I have seen much insisted upon in some of the newspapers—that this was a *tythe*, and that all tythes are unfavourable alike to industry. The argument has no application to the present case. The tenth, which this bill imposes, is a tenth of the clear profits after the expenses of labour have been deducted. The more I have thought upon this particular subject and upon taxation in general, the more am I convinced not only of the futility, but the danger of any attempt, by the distribution of imposts, to make any difference in that order which the nature of society has already established. It is necessary to observe the arrangements which have been already formed, and to accommodate the proportion of taxes to the classes of property which have already been marked. To proceed beyond this, is to dissolve all established principles, and to overthrow the fabric of society which time and the progress of accumulation have reared.

Another curious inference may be drawn from the observations made against the hardships incurred by persons possessed of life estates, of temporary ones, and of those who receive the rewards of laborious employments. It happens singularly enough, that the public offices held under government, uniting in their

nature profits derived from labour and temporary estates, are included in the operation of the bill. Now, Sir, these gentlemen who oppose it, have proposed on former occasions, as a great resource for the national expenditure, that all those offices should be made to contribute largely to the public service—I do not mean sinecures, for they wished to suppress them. The calculations furnished this night are not more exact than those of the honourable baronet on that occasion; the references certainly were not those of the board of agriculture, [a general laugh]; but the honourable baronet had made the prodigious discovery, that if all the public offices were placed on a reduced establishment, and others suppressed, the sum of ten millions would be saved to the public. I was highly pleased with the project, and sincerely wished for the execution of it; but I was always unfortunately stopped in every attempt I made to go on with it, by finding that the entire expenses of the public offices only amounted to one-tenth of the prodigious saving which was so confidently held out. The honourable baronet's attention has been taken up with agricultural studies and military tactics, or he might have known, that a committee appointed for the express purpose, had made a very different calculation. We have already had a committee of finance, which has discharged the important duties attached to it in the most satisfactory manner—a committee which, except that the honourable baronet was not a member of it, is perfectly to the mind of every gentleman in this house, and many of its suggestions for economy and regulation have been carried into effect with great advantage.—From this digression, however, into which I have been carried by the subject of offices, I now return.

I was stating with how little favour the honourable gentleman and his friends formerly considered annuities for life in the case of laborious offices; let us now see how their old opinions tally with their new, namely, this branch of income was most obnoxious to taxation, now it is to be most favoured. The honourable gentleman does not think that a great increase of taxes on consumption would be more advantageous than a general tax

on all income. Is the inequality or the hardship greater now than it was, or than it would be, should taxes on consumption be increased? If not, then the honourable gentleman is only quarrelling with this tax, because it is not so unequal as the former mode of contribution had been. This plan, which is more general, more comprehensive, which embraces a great deal of property which formerly eluded taxation, and, by consequence, distributes the burden more fairly, is considered inadmissible. But I am told, that a large sum within the year cannot be raised by encreasing the existing taxes on consumption. What is the consequence? Does not the honourable gentleman compel us to resort to the more expensive expedient of raising money by loans, instead of adopting a plan more extensive in its effect, while it provides for the redemption of what it is necessary to borrow, without that load of permanent taxes, which the funding system renders indispensable? But, it is said that a tax on capital is preferable. Was it not proved, however, that from the state of landed property, not more than one-third of it is now in the hands of persons who could be called upon to contribute, so that two-thirds would be placed wholly out of reach for any purpose of present exertion? What is the great object of the measure before the house? Is it not to raise within the year, from what constitutes the means of individuals within the year, such a proportion as is deemed necessary for the exigencies of the state, and the magnitude of the present crisis? Do you wish to avoid burdening the public with a loan? What advantage would you derive from it, however, if individuals mortgage their estates? Would not the aggregate of private loans encumber the mass of national wealth as much as if the nation contracted the obligation? The object then is to make the annual means of individuals applicable to a supply within the year.

It is objected still that it is unjust that the man who has an annuity or an income, the fruit of his labour, should pay in the proportion of a man who has the same revenue from fixed property. This objection is altogether a fallacy. A permanent

estate, which is represented as never dying, and, as it were, the property of a man after his death, contributes on every exigency which may occur; the income from labour and industry is extinguished; it contributes but once; it is no longer the property of the same person; while the other, which is considered as the same property, is subject to renewed demands. This reasoning may be thought refined; but the answer is justly applicable in the case where the reason, why fixed property should contribute more, is founded on its 'supposed permanency, in opposition to the fleeting character of the other. How then is it possible to discriminate between the various kinds of property? or to enter into the details which could alone enable you to apply any scale of exemption, without an investigation more oppressive, a disclosure more extensive, than any thing which the bill permits? How much safer is it to submit to those inequalities which are the lot of man, and which it is not the business, nor is it in the power, of schemes of finance to correct! Could we even indulge the wish to correct these inequalities, which arise out of the very nature of society, is this the legislative remedy? Let us then forbear to attempt what is perhaps beyond the power of human legislation to correct. It is an enterprize that would hurry us far beyond our depth, and lead to consequences far more extensive than we can foresee, and might produce an overthrow of all establishments, and all regular order, which it is impossible to contemplate without apprehension. The principle of argument that goes to remedy this supposed evil, belongs to the school of dangerous innovation which we ought not for a moment to indulge. The consequence of this tax then will be, that whoever contributes a tenth of his income under this bill will have a tenth less to spend, to save, or to accumulate. At the end of the war those who shall have contributed will be no poorer; they will only be to the extent of it less increased in riches than they would have been. The advantages of it are in a particular manner in favour of those on whom it will fall, instead of accumulating taxes on consumption, as it will bring all income to contribute more equally, and include a great deal of

that which, in the hands of those who spend less than their income, escapes contribution altogether. Laying aside the proud idea of the vigour, permanence, and renewing energy which this measure secures, there is one case which, with a view to that class who are really willing to save for the benefit of those for whom they are bound to provide, makes some modification. It is in favour of those who have recourse to that easy, certain, and advantageous mode of providing for their families by insuring their lives. In this bill, as in the assessed taxes, a deduction is allowed for what is paid on this account.

Such is the general view of the merits of this important question. It is one which has engaged much of my serious attention, and I am far from presuming that it has already attained the perfection of which it is capable. The inequalities objected to it are not peculiar to its nature; they arise from our social state itself, and the correction of that order we cannot, as we ought not, attempt to alter. It would be a presumptuous attempt to derange the order of society, which would terminate in producing confusion, havock, and destruction, and with a derangement of property, terminate in the overthrow of civilized life.

The motion for the further consideration of the report was carried;

Ayes..... 183

Noes..... 17

January 23, 1799.

THE House, pursuant to the order of the day, proceeded to take into consideration the following message from his Majesty relative to an Union between Great Britain and Ireland:

“GEORGE R.

“His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament; and his Majesty recommends it to this house to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting and finally defeating this design; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred

(joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest), will dispose the parliament of both kingdoms to provide, in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connexion essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire. G. R."

After an address in the usual form had been moved by Mr. Dundas, and an amendment upon it by Mr. Sheridan entreating his Majesty not to listen to the counsel of those who should advise an Union of the legislatures of the two kingdoms under the existing circumstances of the empire,

MR. PITT rose:

SIR,—Considering the manner in which this subject has been agitated, I feel that I ought to make an apology to the house for creating any delay in the determination of a point, upon which I really think much difference of opinion cannot subsist; I mean upon the vote to be given on the question which is now before us. But as this point, clear as in itself I take it to be, is connected with others on which depends the best interest of the whole of the British empire, I must ask the indulgence of the house, while I advert to the general principle of the subject which is now before us. It is far from being my intention to do now, what indeed could not now be regularly attempted, and what hereafter it will be my duty to do—I mean, to lay before this house a detailed particular of a plan, the spirit of which is only alluded to in general terms in the gracious communication from the throne to this house; that is what I shall have the honour of doing hereafter: the matter for the discussion of the house at this moment is comprised in the original motion of my right honourable friend,* and the amendment proposed by the right honourable gentleman.†

The address proposed in answer to the message, pledges the house to nothing more than that of assuring his Majesty, that you will take into your serious consideration a subject which is recommended to your care, and which is highly interesting to the welfare of the British empire. The amendment of the ho-

* Mr. Dundas.

† Mr. Sheridan.

nourable gentleman calls upon you at once to declare, you will not deliberate upon the matter. The honourable gentleman produced one argument only in support of the conclusion he calls upon you to draw, and which he says he has established. He said, near the end of his speech, that which, if it were true, would indeed establish his conclusion. He has told you, that you have no legitimate power of making your deliberations effectual. He has told you, without much argument, what no other person has hitherto told this house in this house, but what has been told it and the public, upon whom by the way it is intended in the first instance to operate, in pamphlets and various other publications which are daily ushered forth in this country and in Ireland, that you have no legitimate power to determine upon this measure. The honourable gentleman adopts that doctrine. He has taken upon himself to deny the right of the parliament of either kingdom to determine upon this matter. I say the right of the parliament of either, for he cannot make any distinction between the two. If the parliament of Ireland has no just power or legitimate authority without the immediate instruction, not of its constituents merely, but of the people of Ireland in the mass,—I say, if the parliament of Ireland has not any legitimate authority to determine upon this subject without the instructions of the people at large, as little has the parliament of England such authority—as little had the parliament of Scotland that authority—as little had the parliament of England and Scotland that authority when they agreed upon the union between the two kingdoms—an union under which has grown up and flourished the prosperity of both; under which the laws of both have been improved; under which property has been protected; under which has been cherished a principle of cordial co-operation, which has led to the happiness of Great-Britain, and has rendered it the envy, and, I trust, will make it the protection of surrounding nations. You sit in that chair, Sir—I stand here before you—the honourable gentleman himself addressed you this night, called upon this house to entertain a debate, without any right whatever; we are all totally destitute

of legitimate authority, if the honourable gentleman is right in the principle he contended for this night upon this part of the subject. Indeed if he be right in that principle, you have no parliament in England possessed of legal and just authority at this hour; there is no act which you have performed for the last ninety years, however well intended, or however effectual for the happiness of the people of Great Britain, that can be said to be legitimate or legal.

I know not what ideas the honourable gentleman may entertain, or what aid he expects, or what aid he will find ready to be given to his doctrine, that "parliament is not competent to the discussion of this subject." I know it leads immediately to the system of universal right of suffrage in the people; to the doctrine, that each man should have an actual share in the government of the country, by having a choice for his representative; and then goes back to the whole system of jacobinism, which I thought had been pretty nearly exploded as soon as it came to be pretty well understood all over Europe. I say, if the honourable gentleman avows this, then, but not till then, will his argument upon this head of the subject be intelligible and consistent; for without this, the whole of what he said upon the matter will be quite obscure, if not altogether without a meaning. The honourable gentleman, I believe, is not in his heart any advocate for any such doctrine; and yet to this length his argument leads, or there is an end of that part of the topic he brought before you. If you deny the competence of parliament which fully and freely represents all the people of this country (and here let it be remembered that I am using no language of my own, but am following the approved language of our ancestors), there is an end of all your authority, not in this point only, but in every other point. Now, let us see how this will apply to the argument of the honourable gentleman in the rest of his speech to-night. He complains that a question is agitated, and an address is moved upon this subject. The address is moved, as I said yesterday in this house it was intended to be moved, and it involves a question upon which I thought

there would be no opposition.—Why? Because the detail of the matter would not now be brought forward. That is reserved for another opportunity; and however necessary the measure may be, and I am convinced it is, yet I know it has, and must have its difficulties. I know it is liable, necessarily liable, to a thousand difficulties, because subject to a thousand prejudices and partial objections; to sentiments hastily conceived by some, and eagerly adopted by others, to local and confined views, to personal affections, and to a multitude of impediments, which, however firm our own opinions may be of the indispensable necessity of the measure for the happiness, and even the security of the British empire, yet have induced his Majesty's ministers not to enter upon the detail at this moment. Upon these topics, therefore, I shall decline for the present entering upon any explanation. But although I do not think it right to detail the subject at this moment, and although I may have that honour at another time, yet I must say that the honourable gentleman's complaint against surprise is extremely ill founded. I think that if any complaint could fairly be urged against us upon that subject, it would be that we have shewn perhaps too much caution against surprise; and although, for the reasons I have alleged already) I shall decline at present entering upon any detail of the plan which is intended to be submitted to parliament, I must be allowed to answer the objections of the honourable gentleman. Here then let me again observe, that after a message comes from the throne, recommending in substance an union between the two kingdoms, nothing in the first instance is proposed but a general address, pledging the house to nothing more than that it will take the subject into serious consideration. A day is stated, on which the outline of the plan to be submitted to parliament is to be opened, that is the general principle of the measure. The discussion is further to be postponed, nor is it proposed that parliament shall be called upon to determine upon it until after due time has been taken for ample deliberation. I should have thought the honourable gentleman himself would

have at least allowed there was candour and fairness in the mode of the proceeding.

If, therefore, the case be as I state it—if his Majesty has recommended the subject to your deliberation—if the address contains only a pledge that you will deliberate, the short question is—Should you now adopt the mode which those who have the honour of serving his Majesty presume to recommend to you gravely, and on which time will be given to deliberate on all its parts; or should you pronounce in the first instance, without examination, that it is a measure wholly unnecessary, or so dangerous, or impracticable, or so attended with evils, that you will not even so much as inquire into its contents, that you will at once shut the door against it? The honourable gentleman seems to think so. It is not enough for us to say we shall bring forward a proposition, involving in it the happiness of the whole of the British empire, including points requiring great attention, upon which we do not desire your immediate decision, but we desire you to tell the throne, in answer to its gracious communication, that you will consider the subject. The honourable gentleman says No! you shall enter upon no enquiry upon the matter; I know enough of it already to convince you that you ought to reject it at once. If that be the proposition of the honourable gentleman, and so it is, I conceive that he is bound to make out that proposition to your satisfaction, in which case I conceive he is called upon to prove, either that the present state of Ireland is such that it requires no remedy whatever, or that if it does require a remedy, a better may be proposed than any which has an union for its basis, or that an union, at all events, must be such an evil that you ought not to deliberate upon it at all. This may be the opinion of the honourable gentleman, but has he stated any thing to make out the propriety of that opinion? For many years past I have heard from that honourable gentleman and his friends upon the affairs of Ireland nothing but complaints and lamentations. They have been in the constant habit of declaiming, sometimes upon the unjust and cruel,

at other times upon the inefficient and defective system by which Ireland not only has been governed by the executive, but also by the deliberative powers of the country. We have often been reminded of the unfortunate distraction of all its parts of government, and of the evils which have resulted from the whole collectively; nay we have been told, and that pretty confidently, from a gentleman who usually took the lead on the other side of this house, that the system by which Ireland was governed was radically defective; that indeed it was so full of deformity in its very constitution, as that, if we wished to answer the cavils of those who disputed the beauty of the constitution of Great Britain, we could not do better than desire them to look at her sister, who was so ugly, that when she was beheld, all objections against the other would vanish. I remember these things full well, Sir, and I know not how the honourable gentleman has forgotten them, and how he comes now to see none of these defects. How he comes all at once to be satisfied that this was an unjust picture of Ireland; how he comes to be all at once satisfied, that Ireland is as secure as she had need to be; that her government wants no remedy—is not for me, but for him to explain to this house. The novelty of his praise of the parliament of Ireland is not to be suspected by me as an insincere compliment. He has certainly seen that parliament do much that deserved praise, but he has not seen enough to enable him to prove that the happiness of that country is perfectly secure; he has not seen enough to prove that there has not lately been there a desperate rebellion; he has not seen enough to prove that this house should conclude that the safety of that part of the British empire is at this moment perfectly secure; he has not seen enough to enable him to prove that there exist not at this hour in Ireland evils which we all deplore, and which we have much more reason to deplore than we had those which he has so repeatedly, and so vehemently, in conjunction with others, called to the attention of this house—I say the evils to which Ireland is at this moment exposed, and the still greater evils to which it may hereafter be exposed, if the wisdom of the legislature of the two

countries does not prevent it. I say that Ireland is subject to great and deplorable evils, which have a deep root, for they lie in the situation of the country itself—in the present character, manners and habits of its inhabitants—in their want of intelligence, or, in other words, their ignorance—in the unavoidable separation between certain classes—in the state of property—in its religious distinctions—in the rancour which bigotry engenders and superstition rears and cherishes.

The honourable gentleman tells us these are evils which cannot be cured in a moment. I know they cannot, Sir, but the question is, whether we should not adopt some plan which may lead to that cure in the course of time? If indeed it could have been done by what that honourable gentleman and his friends have often recommended in this house, by what they call a catholic emancipation and a parliamentary reform, the task would have been a good deal easier than in truth it is; but catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform is a phrase made use of by some to cover designs of a very different nature. If such an object could be kept in view and be attained by calm, dispassionate, sober investigation, no man would be readier than myself to assent to any measure for that purpose. But if the state of society is such, that laws, however wise in themselves, will be ineffectual as to their object until the manners and customs of the people are altered—if men are in a state of poverty in which it is impossible they can have any comfort—if the progress of civilization depends in a great measure upon the distribution of wealth—if the improvement of that wealth depends much upon the distribution of capital—if all the advantages to be derived from an increase of national wealth depend much upon the temper of the inhabitants—if those advantages together with the still greater advantage of mental improvement, are all retarded by the distractions and divisions of party, by the blind zeal and phrenzy of religious prejudices, by old and furious family feuds—if all, I say, combine to make a country wretched, what is the remedy? An impartial legislature standing aloof from local party connexion, sufficiently removed from the influence of con-

tending factions, to be advocate or champion of neither—being so placed as to have no superstitious reverence for the names and prejudices of ancient families, who have so long enjoyed the exclusive monopolies of certain public patronages and property, which custom has sanctioned, and which modern necessity may justify—a legislature who will neither give way to the haughty pretensions of a few, nor open the door to popular inroads, to clamour, or to invasion of all sacred forms and regularities, under the false and imposing colours of philosophical improvement in the art of government. This is the thing that is wanted for Ireland. Where is it to be found? In that country, where the evils which I have enumerated exist, or in this? That is to say, where should that legislature deliberate? In a place where the utmost effort of what is called patriotism amounts to nothing more than an aim at temporary popularity, as is evident from what has happened; or in a place where the discussion is calm and temperate? Certainly the latter, that is, in England. To neglect to establish such a legislature, when it is possible to do so, I say is an imprudence which nothing can justify. I say also, that much of the evil which Ireland now labours under, arises unavoidably from the condition of the parliament of that country.

(One point at which I have just hinted, is the want of introduction of capital into that country. How can that be removed? By connexion and intercourse with Great Britain, which will improve the temper and manners, as well as the understandings of the people of Ireland: by a parliament that shall have no jealousies from local prejudices; this can only be the case when a parliament deliberates in England, and that, too, upon the interest of both countries united. I say it is upon this, and this only, that the happiness of the people of that country depends, and I say too, that, upon this view of the subject, the honourable gentleman, instead of opposing, should be led to support the measure before us, as being peculiarly adapted to meet evils, of which he as well as many of his friends have frequently complained. But he has not scrupled to tell us that he is astonished

to hear, for the first time, that the final adjustment, as he calls it, which was made in the year 1782, has been found incompetent to the blessings it was intended to convey. What were the objects which were then in view? The independence of the legislature of that country most certainly; but I beg leave to add, that there was a resolution entered into in the Irish parliament, the substance of which is,—that the interests of Great Britain and Ireland are inseparable, that the connexion ought to be founded on a permanent and solid basis, and that Ireland would adopt such measures as should be consistent with its own internal tranquillity, for which its situation fits it, and as may be connected with the strength and stability of the whole of the British empire. Here then is a proof that something was left to be done after the legislature of Ireland gained its independence. This resolution was carried to the throne, but nothing was ever done upon it. What am I now proposing for the sake of Ireland? I am not content that Ireland shall have some benefits as part of the British empire; but I am proposing, that Ireland shall be allowed to participate of the blessings which at present England enjoys.

It was said by the honourable gentleman, that this country had oppressed Ireland for three hundred years: that is not a point to which I assent; but I will say that for one hundred years this country has followed a very narrow policy with regard to that country. It manifested a very absurd jealousy concerning the growth, produce, and manufacture of several articles—I say that these jealousies will be buried by the plan which is now to be brought before you. I say that when you have two independent parliaments in one empire, you have no security for a continuance of their harmony and cordial co-operation. We all have in our mouths a sentence, that every good Englishman and good Irishman feels—we must stand or fall together—we should live and die together; and yet without such a measure as that which is about to be proposed to you, there can be no security for the continuance of that sentiment. I say the happiness of both countries ought to be perpetual: as it stands now it is liable

to a thousand accidents ; it depends now upon the violence of the moment ; it may be governed, as I have said already, upon views of temporary popularity, or upon the personal convenience of a few individuals, a tenure upon which the happiness of a nation ought never to depend. I am not stating these things without foundation, but am referring to what was done by two champions of parties in that country and in this, the one of whom* had a large pecuniary reward for his labours, and the other† was the subject of great panegyric in that country and in this. They were satisfied when the legislature of Ireland was declared independent of this country. True it is, that the parliament of that country was declared independent of this. It had what was supposed to be, sovereign power ; it has the power of dictating to the executive authority upon the questions of war and peace, in the same controlling manner as the parliament of this country has : but what security is there that they will both agree upon all questions hereafter, in which the general interest of the British empire is involved ? Is it a difficult thing to suppose a case in which they may clash, and become perhaps as hostile to one another as any two independent bodies politic in Europe ? I have no difficulty in saying that such a case might possibly happen, nor do I think that much was gained by the declaration of the independence of that parliament, or ever will be gained to the British empire, until there is some security that both legislatures will go on harmoniously together upon all questions in which the general interests of the British empire are involved. Neither do I much admire the philosophy of that person who thinks he has completed a beautiful new fabric when he has only completed the destruction of an old one ; who calls that destruction “ the most stupendous pile of human wisdom that ever was exhibited to the world.” When I find such a man after the act was passed which declared the independence of the Irish parliament, assenting to the principle of a resolution of a committee, stating that the connexion between the two countries should be established by mutual consent on a solid and permanent basis, and when

* Mr. Grattan.

† Mr. Fox.

I find that such a resolution was carried to the throne, as I have said already, and when I reflect that nothing was afterwards done upon that resolution to carry it into effect, I have the authority of that person and his friends that what was done in declaring the parliament of Ireland independent, was defective in a point which is indispensable for the happiness of the people of Ireland, and indeed of both countries. I think then I may say that the *onus* is upon those who oppose the measure now before us to shew its bad tendency, rather than upon us to shew its probable good effect, for their own conduct proclaims the absolute necessity of something being done; it is incumbent upon all those who took a part in the discussion of that subject, and who approved of the measure—the childish measure of the independence of the parliament of Ireland!—without any security that the parliament of that country and of this would never differ essentially upon any point in which the happiness of the British empire may be involved, to shew it, and upon the honourable gentleman who moved this amendment, as much as any one, for he took an active share in the parliamentary proceedings to which I have just alluded.

How stands the case in point of experience? Is there a probability, or is there not, that the parliaments of the two countries may differ upon a point that may be essentially interesting to the British empire? I say you have a guide upon that subject. You may profit by experience.—I mean by the case of the *regency*. The honourable gentleman says that there was no difference between the two parliaments as to the regent. Why, no, Sir, there was no difference as to the *person* who was to be regent; but there was an essential difference as to the *principle* on which that person was to be regent; the Irish parliament decided on one principle, the English parliament on another, and their having agreed on the person was accidental; and upon the distinct principles on which the two parliaments proceeded, they might as well have differed upon the person who was to be, as on the powers to be granted to the regent. Now let any man tell me that this is not an instance of an essential difference upon a point

that was essential to the welfare of the British empire : and let any man shew me what security there is that an essential difference upon some other object may not hereafter occur between the two parliaments. That they have not hitherto differed in the great and momentous events which have been agitated before parliament, is a good fortune which has arisen from one general cause, that of all descriptions of persons having united against one common enemy, with the exception only of a few, whose counsels, happily for both countries, and for the civilized part of the world, have lost all their influence. But will any man tell me, that such difference as was manifested in the time of the regency will never occur again ? Will any man tell me, when we come to treat of peace, for instance, or to consider any subject of alliance with any foreign power, or upon any question of trade or commerce, that then the local prejudices, I say prejudices, for they have great influence, may not occasion a difference between the legislatures upon points that may be essential to the welfare of the British empire ? No matter what the cause of the difference may be, it is enough that there may be such a difference. A party in England may give to the throne one species of advice by its parliament ; a party in Ireland may advise directly opposite, upon the most essential points that involve the safety of both — upon alliance with a foreign power, for instance ; upon the army ; upon the navy ; upon any branch of the public service ; upon trade ; upon commerce ; or, upon any point that might be essential to the empire at large. Let any man tell me, what would have been the consequence to both England and Ireland, had the dissensions in Ireland been the same in point of force against the executive government in parliament, since the commencement of the present war, as they were at the time the Irish propositions were rejected ? Had these men who were at the head of opposition either in that country or in this, possessed the confidence of any considerable part of the public, will any man tell me, that any minister would have been able to save this country or Ireland from destruction ? But happily for us, happily for every part of the civilized world, the iniquity of the common

enemy united us all; else all the evils which I have already stated, together with the poison of jacobinism, would have come upon us, and such a complication would have soon completed the ruin of our empire; but fortunately, I say, the counsels of those who favoured such principles were rejected with disdain by the good sense of mankind at large. But when that cement by which the two legislatures have been held together, shall cease to operate, what security is there for the continuance of cordial co-operation? None whatever: the probability of its continuance is more than doubtful; for I do say, for the reasons I have alleged already, that the present state of society in Ireland, as well as its representation, which partakes of the nature of that society, is radically defective.

I am aware, Sir, that I have spoken at a greater length on this subject than might have been expected in its present stage. I have thought a great deal upon this subject, and what I have said has been nothing but the result of my own observations. I am bound to convey to this house every information which it may be in my power to give; but however acceptable to the one or to the other side of the house, however acceptable or otherwise to those whom I respect on the other side the water, my sentiments upon this subject may be, my duty compels me to speak them freely. I see the case so plainly, and I feel it so strongly, that there is no circumstance of apparent or probable difficulty, no apprehension of popularity, no fear of toil or labour, that shall prevent me from using every exertion which remains in my power to accomplish the work that is now before us, and on which I am persuaded depend the internal tranquillity of Ireland, the interest of the British empire at large, and, I hope, I may add, the happiness of a great part of the habitable world.

The amendment was negatived without a division, and the motion for the address was then put and carried.

January 31, 1799.

THE order of the day being read for taking into further consideration his Majesty's message relative to an Union between Great Britain and Ireland,

“GEORGE R.

“His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament; and his Majesty recommends it to this House to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting, and finally defeating, this design; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest) will dispose the parliaments of both kingdoms to provide in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connexion essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources, of the British empire;—

G. R.”

MR. PITT, rose, and spoke as follows:

Sir—When I proposed to the house, the last time this subject was before them, to fix this day for the further consideration of his Majesty's message, I certainly indulged the hope that the result of a similar communication to the parliament of Ireland would have opened a more favourable prospect than at present exists, of the speedy accomplishment of a measure which I then stated, and which I still consider, to be of the greatest importance to the power, the stability, and the general welfare of the empire; to the immediate interests of both kingdoms; and more particularly to the peace, the tranquillity, and the safety of Ireland: in this hope, I am sorry to say, I have for the present been disappointed, by the proceedings of the Irish house of commons, of which we have been informed since this subject was last under consideration.

I feel and know that the parliament of Ireland possesses the power, the entire competence, on the behalf of that country, alike to accept or reject a proposition of this nature—a power which I am by no means inclined to dispute. I see that at the present moment one house of parliament in Ireland has express-

ed a repugnance even to the consideration of this measure. Feeling, Sir, as I have already stated, that it is important, not only as it tends to the general prosperity of the empire of Great Britain, but (what, under every situation, must always be to me an object of the greatest moment) feeling that it was designed and calculated to increase the prosperity and ensure the safety of Ireland, I must have seen with the deepest regret, that, at the very first moment, and before the nature of the measure could be known, it was so received.

But whatever may have been my feelings upon this subject, knowing that it is the undoubted right of the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt such measures as may appear to them injurious or beneficial, far be it from me to speak of its determination in any other terms but those of respect. Let it not, therefore, be imagined that I am inclined to press any sentiment, however calculated it may appear to me to benefit every member of the empire, in any manner which may lead to hostile discussion between two kingdoms, whose mutual happiness and safety depend upon their being strictly and cordially united. But while I admit and respect the rights of the parliament of Ireland, I feel that, as a member of the parliament of Great Britain, I also have a right to exercise, and a duty to perform. That duty is to express, as distinctly as I can, the general nature and outline of the plan, which, in my conscience, I think would tend in the strongest manner to ensure the safety and the happiness of both kingdoms.

While I feel, therefore, that as long as the house of commons of Ireland view the subject in the light they do at present, there is no chance of its adoption, I do not think that I ought on that account to abstain from submitting it to the consideration of this parliament; on the contrary, I think it only the more necessary to explain distinctly the principles of the measure, and to state the grounds upon which it appears to me to be entitled to the approbation of the legislature.

If parliament, when it is in possession of the basis upon which this plan is founded, and of its general outline, should be of opi-

nion with me, that it is founded upon fair, just, and equitable principles, calculated to produce mutual advantages to the two kingdoms—if parliament, I say, upon full explanation, and after mature deliberation, should be of that opinion, I should propose that its determination should remain recorded as that by which the parliament of Great Britain is ready to abide, leaving to the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt it hereafter, upon a full consideration of the subject.

There is no man who will deny, that, in a great question of this nature, involving in it objects which, in the first instance, are more likely to be decided upon by passion than by judgment;—in a question in which an honest, but, I must be allowed to say, a mistaken, sense of national pride is so likely to operate, much misconstruction and misconception must inevitably happen. It therefore becomes the more necessary that the intentions of the government which proposes the measure, and the principles of the measure itself, should be distinctly understood. But, Sir, in stating that intention and those principles, I look to something more than a mere vindication of government for having proposed the measure. I do entertain a confidence, even under the apparent discouragement of the opinion expressed by the Irish house of commons, that this measure is founded upon such clear, such demonstrable grounds of utility, is so calculated to add to the strength and power of the empire, (in which the safety of Ireland is included, and from which it never can be separated) and is attended with so many advantages to Ireland in particular, that all that can be necessary for its ultimate adoption is, that it should be stated distinctly, temperately, and fully, and that it should be left to the unprejudiced, the dispassionate, the sober judgment of the parliament of Ireland. I wish that those whose interests are involved in this measure should have time for its consideration—I wish that time should be given to the landed, to the mercantile, and manufacturing interest, that they should look at it in all its bearings, and that they should coolly examine and sift the popular arguments by which it has

been opposed, and that then they should give their deliberate and final judgment.

I am the more encouraged in this hope of the ultimate success of this measure, when I see, notwithstanding all the prejudices which it has excited, that barely more than one half of the members that attended the house of commons were adverse to it; and that in the other house of parliament in Ireland, containing, as it does, so large a portion of the property of that kingdom, it was approved of by a large majority. When I have reason to believe that the sentiments of a large part of the people of that country are favourable to it, and that much of the manufacturing, and of the commercial interest of Ireland, are already sensible how much it is calculated to promote their advantage, I think, when it is more deliberately examined, and when it is seen in what temper it is here proposed and discussed, that it will still terminate in that which can alone be a fortunate result.

It would be vain indeed to hope that a proposition upon which prejudices are so likely to operate, and which is so liable to misconception, should be unanimously approved. But the approbation I hope for is that of the parliament of Ireland, and of the intelligent part of the public of that country. It is with a view to this object that I think it my duty to bring this measure forward at present; not for the sake of urging its immediate adoption, but that it may be known and recorded; that the intention of the British parliament may be known, in the hope that it will produce similar sentiments among our countrymen in Ireland. With this view, it is my intention not to go at present into any detailed statement of the plan, because, should it ultimately be adopted, the minuter parts must necessarily become the objects of much distinct discussion; but to give such a general statement of the nature of the measure, as will enable the house to form a correct judgment upon it.

I shall therefore, Sir, before I sit down, open to the house a string of resolutions, comprising the general heads of this plan.

It will be necessary for me, for the purpose of discussing those resolutions with regularity and convenience, to move that the house should resolve itself into a committee. And I have already stated, that it is not my intention then to press the committee to come to an immediate decision upon the resolutions ; but if, upon full and deliberate examination, the resolutions which I shall have the honour to propose, and which contain as much as is necessary for an outline of the plan, shall be approved, my opinion is, that nothing can contribute more to obviate any doubts and dissatisfaction which may exist, than that parliament should adopt those resolutions, and that it should then humbly lay them at the foot of the throne, leaving it to his Majesty's wisdom to communicate them to the parliament of Ireland, whenever circumstances should appear favourable to such a measure. I shall therefore, Sir, proceed as shortly as I can to state to the house the nature of the resolutions, and of the address which I shall propose to accompany them, if it should be the pleasure of the house to adopt them.

Having now, Sir, explained to the house the mode I mean to pursue, and my reasons for persisting, under the present circumstances, in submitting this measure to the consideration of parliament, I will endeavour to state the general grounds on which it rests, the general arguments by which it is recommended, and to give a short view of the outline of the plan.

As to the general principle upon which the whole of this measure is founded, I am happy to observe, from what passed upon a former occasion, that there is not a probability of any difference of opinion. The general principle, to which both sides of the house perfectly acceded, is, that a perpetual connection between Great Britain and Ireland is essential to the interests of both. The only honourable gentleman who, when this subject was before the house on a former day, opposed the consideration of the plan altogether, stated, in terms as strong as I could wish, the necessity of preserving the strictest connection between the two countries. I most cordially agree with him in that opinion ;

but I then stated, that I do not barely wish for the maintenance of that connection, as tending to add to the general strength of the empire, but I wish for the maintenance of it with a peculiar regard to the local interests of Ireland, with a regard to every thing that can give to Ireland its due weight and importance, as a great member of the empire. I wish for it with a view of giving to that country the means of improving all its great natural resources, and of giving it a full participation of all those blessings which this country so eminently enjoys.

Considering the subject in this point of view, and assuming it as a proposition not to be controverted, that it is the duty of those who wish to promote the interest and prosperity of both countries, to maintain the strongest connection between them, let me ask, what is the situation of affairs that has called us to the discussion of this subject? This very connection, the necessity of which has been admitted on all hands, has been attacked by foreign enemies, and by domestic traitors. The dissolution of this connection is the great object of the hostility of the common enemies of both countries; it is almost the only remaining hope with which they now continue the contest. Baffled and defeated as they have hitherto been, they still retain the hope, they are still meditating attempts, to dissolve that connection. In how many instances already the defeat of their hostile designs has been turned to the confirmation of our strength and security, I need not enumerate. God grant that in this instance the same favour of divine Providence, which has in so many instances protected this empire, may again interpose in our favour, and that the attempts of the enemy to separate the two countries, may tend ultimately to knit them more closely together, to strengthen a connection, the best pledge for the happiness of both, and so add to that power which forms the chief barrier to the civilized world, against the destructive principles, the dangerous projects, and the unexampled usurpation of France! This connection has been attacked not only by the avowed enemies of both countries, but by internal treason, acting in concert with the de-

signs of the enemy—internal treason, which ingrafted jacobinism on those diseases which necessarily grew out of the state and condition of Ireland.

Thinking, then, as we all must think, that a close connection with Ireland is essential to the interests of both countries, and seeing how much this connection is attacked, let it not be insinuated that it is unnecessary, much less improper, at this arduous and important crisis, to see whether some new arrangements, some fundamental regulations, are not necessary, to guard against the threatened danger. The foreign and domestic enemies of these kingdoms have shewn, that they think this the vulnerable point in which we may be most successfully attacked: let us derive advantage, if we can, from the hostility of our enemies; let us profit by the designs of those who, if their conduct displays no true wisdom, at least possess in an eminent degree that species of wisdom which is calculated for the promotion of mischief. They know upon what footing that connection rests at this moment between the two countries, and they feel the most ardent hope, that the two parliaments will be infatuated enough not to render their designs abortive, by fixing that connection upon a more solid basis.

These circumstances, I am sure, will not be denied. And if upon other grounds we had any doubt, these circumstances alone ought to induce us, deliberately and dispassionately, to review the situation of the two countries, and to endeavour to find out a proper remedy for an evil, the existence of which is but too apparent. It requires but a moment's reflection, for any man who has marked the progress of events, to decide upon the true state and character of this connection. It is evidently one which does not afford that security which, even in times less dangerous and less critical than the present, would have been necessary, to enable the empire to avail itself of its strength and its resources.

When I last addressed the house on this subject, I stated that the settlement, which was made in 1782, so far from deserving the name of a final adjustment, was one that left the connec-

tion between Great Britain and Ireland exposed to all the attacks of party, and all the effects of accident. That settlement consisted in the demolition of the system which before held the two countries together. Let me not be understood as expressing any regret at the termination of that system. I disapproved of it, because I thought it was one unworthy the liberality of Great Britain, and injurious to the interests of Ireland. But to call that a system in itself—to call that a glorious fabric of human wisdom, which is no more than the mere demolition of another system, is a perversion of terms which, however prevalent of late, can only be the effect of gross misconception, or of great hypocrisy.

We boast that we have done every thing, when we have merely destroyed all that before existed, without substituting any thing in its place. Such was the *final adjustment* of 1782; and I can prove it to be so, not only from the plainest reasoning, but I can prove it by the opinion expressed by the British parliament at that very time. I can prove it by the opinion expressed by those very ministers by whom it was proposed and conducted. I can prove it by the opinion of that very government who boast of having effected a final adjustment. I refer for what I have said to proofs which they will find it very difficult to answer—I mean their own acts, which will plainly shew that they were of opinion that a new system would be necessary.

But, Sir, I will go farther—I will also produce the authority of one of those whose influence, on the present occasion, has been peculiarly exerted to prevent the discussion of the question in Ireland—of one, of whom I do not wish to speak but with respect, but for whom, nevertheless, I should convey an idea of more respect than I can now feel to be due to him, if I were merely to describe him as the person who fills the same situation, in the house of commons of Ireland, which you, Sir, hold among us, and of which, on all occasions, *you* discharge the duties with a dignity and impartiality which reflects so much credit on yourself, and so well supports the character and authority of the house.

On a former night, I read an extract from the journals, to shew what was the opinion even of those by whom the final adjustment was proposed on that measure. It would there appear, that the message was sent to the parliament of Ireland, recommending to them the adoption of some plan for a final adjustment between the two countries, and wishing to know what were the grounds of the grievances of which they complained. In answer to this message, the parliament of Ireland stated certain grievances, the principal of which was, the power claimed by the parliament of Great Britain of making laws to bind Ireland; but, with respect to that part of the message which related to the propriety of adopting some measures for a final adjustment between the two countries, they were wholly silent. This address was laid before the parliament of Great Britain, to whom a similar message had been previously sent, and on that ground was moved the repeal of what was called the declaratory act; which motion was assented to by the British parliament. This satisfaction was complete in Ireland, as far as related to the grievance of which her parliament had complained, viz. the power of the British parliament of making laws for Ireland, because, by the repeal of the declaratory act, that power was given up. But so far was the minister of that day from considering that the repeal of that law finally terminated all differences, and established the connection between the two countries upon a solid basis, that he thought it necessary to move that a farther settlement was indispensable for the maintenance of that connection. [Mr. Sheridan across the table, desired that that part of the journals to which Mr. Pitt alluded might be read.] Sir, I have stated the substance of the journals correctly; they were read on a former night, and the honourable gentleman may, if he chuses, have them read again; if he does, he will find that they fully justify the statement I have made; but I beg that at present I may not be interrupted. I do maintain, that, upon a reference to the journals of the period to which I have alluded, it will appear that a farther agreement between

Great Britain and Ireland is there stated, in the opinion of the administration of the day, to be absolutely necessary.

I beg farther to state, that after the motion for the bill, of which so much has been said, was passed, an address to his Majesty was moved and carried, praying him to take such further measures as to him seemed proper, to strengthen the connection between the two countries. His Majesty's most gracious answer, stating that, in compliance with the address, he would immediately take such measures as might be necessary for that purpose, was delivered to the house by an honourable gentleman * who then filled the office of secretary of state, and whom we have not lately seen in the house, though he still continues to be a member of it. I do assert, without the least fear of contradiction from any gentleman whatever, that it was in the contemplation of the government of that day, to adopt some measures of the nature alluded to in the address; since that period, however, no such measure has been taken. I do also maintain, that that very system which by these very ministers who brought it forward was found to be imperfect, even for the purpose of maintaining the connection between the two countries, remains at this moment in the same imperfect state. It leaves the two countries with separate and independent legislatures, connected only with this tie, that the third estate in both countries is the same—that the executive government is the same—that the crown exercises its power of assenting to Irish acts of parliament, under the great seal of Great Britain, and by the advice of British ministers.

This is the only principle of connection which is left by the final adjustment of 1782. Whether this is a sufficient tie to unite them in time of peace; whether in time of war it is sufficient to consolidate their strength against a common enemy; whether it is sufficient to guard against those local jealousies which must necessarily sometimes exist between countries so connected; whether it is calculated to give to Ireland all the important commercial and political advantages which she would derive from a

* Mr. Fox.

closer connection with Great Britain; whether it can give to both nations that degree of strength and prosperity which must be the result of such a measure as the present, I believe needs only to be stated to be decided.

But I have already said, that I have, upon this point, the authority of an opinion to which I before alluded—an opinion delivered upon a very important measure, very soon after the final adjustment of 1782. The measure to which I refer, was that of the commercial propositions which were brought forward in 1785. I am not now going to enter into a discussion of the merits of that measure. The best, perhaps, that can be said of it is, that it went as far as circumstances would then permit, to draw the two countries to a closer connection. But those who think that the adjustment of 1782 was final, and that it contained all that was necessary for the establishment of the connection between the two countries upon a firm basis, can hardly contend that the commercial propositions of 1785 were necessary to prevent the danger of separation between the two countries, and to prevent the conflicting operation of independent legislatures. Yet, if I am not mistaken, there will be found, upon a reference to better records than those in which parliamentary debates are usually stated (I mean a statement of what passed in the discussion upon those propositions fourteen years ago, made, as I have understood, by some of the principal parties themselves), that the chancellor of the exchequer of that day in Ireland,* in a debate upon the Irish propositions, held this language—"If this infatuated country gives up the present offer, she may look for it again in vain." Here the right honourable gentleman was happily mistaken; Ireland has again had the offer of the same advantages, but more complete, and in all respects better calculated to attain their object; and this offer the right honourable gentleman has exerted all his influence to reject. But he goes on to say—"things cannot remain as they are—Commercial jealousy is roused—it will increase with two inde-

* Mr. Foster.

pendent legislatures—and without an united interest in commerce, in a commercial empire, political union will receive many shocks, and *separation of interest* must threaten *separation of connection*, which every *honest Irishman* must shudder to look at, as a possible event.”

Gentlemen will have the goodness to observe, that I am not now quoting these expressions as pledges given by that right honourable gentleman that he would support a proposal for an union between the two countries; but I am adducing them to prove, that the situation of the two countries after the final adjustment of 1782 was such, in his opinion, as led to the danger of a separation between them. I am not now arguing, that a legislative union is the only measure which can possibly be adopted; but I am contending, that the adjustment of 1782 was never considered as final, by those who now state it to be so, as an argument against the consideration of the present measure. How the honourable gentleman on the other side of the house will evade this authority I do not know—an authority too, which, I must observe, he seems much more inclined to treat with respect, than he was formerly.

But, Sir, it does not stop there. What is the evil to which he alludes? Commercial jealousies between two countries acting upon the laws of two independent legislatures, and the danger of those legislatures acting in opposition to each other. How can this evil be remedied? By two means only; either by some compact entered into by the legislatures of the two countries respecting the mode of forming their commercial regulations, or else by blending the two legislatures together; these are the only two means. I defy the wit of man to point out a third. The mode of compact was proposed in 1785; but unfortunately, in spite of that right honourable gentleman's eloquence and authority, who then stated the importance of guarding against the evil, it so happened that doctrines, derived chiefly from this side of the water, succeeded in convincing the parliament of Ireland, that it would be inconsistent with their independence, to enter into any compact whatever. We have then the authority of that right

honourable gentleman to whom I have so often alluded, that the unsettled state in which the matter was left, would give "political union many shocks, and lead to a separation of connection." The experiment of a mutual compact has been tried without success; the arrangement of that sort, which was proposed in 1785, in order to obviate the inconveniences stated by the right honourable gentleman, was then attacked with the same success against his authority, as another and more effectual remedy has recently experienced under his auspices. The result then is, you must remain in the state which that right honourable gentleman has described, with the seeds of separation in the system now established, and with the connection, on which the mutual prosperity of both countries depends, in danger of being hourly dissolved, or you must again recur to the proposal of a compact similar to that rejected in 1785, or you must resort to the best and most effectual remedy—a *legislative union*.

I have dwelt longer, perhaps, upon this part of the subject than was absolutely necessary, because I believe there is scarcely any man who has ever asked himself, whether there is a solid, permanent system of connection between the two countries, who could, upon reflection, answer the question in the affirmative. But besides the authorities of the persons who made the arrangement in 1782, and of those who have since treated of it, to shew that it was not deemed to be final and complete, I have further the test of experience to shew how imperfect it was, and how inadequate in practice to the great object of cementing the connection, and placing it beyond the danger of being dissolved. In the single instance which has occurred, (and that a melancholy one which all of us deplored,) in which we could feel the effects of two jarring legislatures, we did feel it. On that occasion, it might have produced the most signal calamities, had we not been rescued from its danger by an event, to which no man can now look back without feeling the utmost joy and exultation;—feelings, which subsequent circumstances have served to heighten and confirm. Every gentleman will know, that I must allude to the regency. With two independent legislatures, acting upon

different principles, it was accident alone that preserved the identity of the executive power, which is the bond and security of the connection: and even then the executive authority, though vested in one person, would have been held by two different tenures, by one tenure in England, by another in Ireland, had not the interposition of Providence prevented a circumstance pregnant with the most imminent perils, and which might have operated to a separation of the two kingdoms.

After seeing the recorded opinion of parliament, of those who made the arrangement of 1782, and after the decided testimony of experience on the subject, within the short period of sixteen years, perhaps it is hardly necessary to appeal to farther proofs of its inadequacy, or to desire gentlemen to look forward to possible cases, which I could easily put, and which will naturally suggest themselves to the minds of all, who chuse to turn their attention to the subject.

But when we consider the distinct powers possessed by the two legislatures on all the great questions of peace and war, of alliances and confederacies, (for they each have in principle a right to discuss them and decide upon them, though one of them has hitherto been wisely restrained by discretion from the exercise of that right) have we not seen circumstances to induce us to think it possible, at least, that on some of these important questions the opinions and decisions of the two parliaments might have been at variance? Are we talking of an indissoluble connection, when we see it thus perpetually liable to be endangered? Can we really think that the interests of the empire, or of its different branches, rest upon a safe and solid basis at present? I am anxious to discuss this point closely with any man, either here, or in Ireland. Will it be said, that the parliament of the latter country is bound by our decision on the question of peace or war? And if not so bound, will any man, looking at human nature as it is, contend, that there is a sufficient certainty that the decision on that important subject will always be the same in both countries? I should be glad to receive a distinct answer to this question from the honourable gentleman, who has

declared himself to be as warm a friend to the connection between the two countries, as I am.

Suppose, for instance, that the present war, which the parliament of Great Britain considers to be just and necessary, had been voted by the Irish parliament to be unjust, unnecessary, extravagant, and hostile to the principles of humanity and freedom. Would that parliament have been bound by this country? If not, what security have we, at a moment the most important to our common interest and common salvation, that the two kingdoms should have but one friend and one foe? I repeat it; I am eager to hear what can be said in justification of a basis so imperfect and unsound, and liable to be shaken by so many accidents. I have already observed that in the peculiar circumstances of the present moment, we may find stronger reasons to prove the necessity of correcting the system of connection between this country and Ireland, of supplying its imperfections, and strengthening its weakness, than are to be found at any former period.

Having thus stated, Sir, and I think sufficiently proved, that the settlement of 1782, in every point of view in which it can be considered, is imperfect, and inadequate to the object of maintaining the connection between the two kingdoms, I proceed next to the circumstances which peculiarly call upon us at the present moment to remedy that imperfection.

This country is at this time engaged in the most important, and momentous conflict that ever occurred in the history of the world; a conflict in which Great Britain is distinguished for having made the only manly and successful stand against the common enemies of civilized society. We see the point in which that enemy thinks us the most assailable. Are we not then bound in policy and prudence to strengthen that vulnerable point, involved as we are in a contest of liberty against despotism--of property against plunder and rapine--of religion and order against impiety and anarchy? There was a time when this would have been termed declamation; but, unfortunately, long and bitter experience has taught us to feel that it is only the feeble and imperfect repre-

sensation of those calamities (the result of French principles and French arms), which are every day attested by the wounds of a bleeding world.

Is there a man who does not admit the importance of a measure which, at such a crisis, may augment the strength of the empire, and thereby ensure its safety? Would not that benefit to Ireland be of itself so solid, so inestimable, that, in comparison with it, all commercial interests, and the preservation of local habits and manners, would be trifling, even if they were endangered by the present, measure which they undoubtedly are not? The people of Ireland are proud, I believe, of being associated with us in the great contest in which we are engaged, and must feel the advantage of augmenting the general force of the empire. That the present measure is calculated to produce that effect, is a proposition which, I think, cannot be disputed. There is not in any court of Europe a statesman so ill informed as not to know, that the general power of the empire would be increased to a very great extent indeed, by such a consolidation of the strength of the two kingdoms. In the course of the century every writer of any information on the subject has held the same language, and in the general strength of the empire both kingdoms are more concerned than in any particular interests which may belong to either. If we were to ask the ministers of our allies, what measure they thought the most likely to augment the power of the British empire, and consequently increase that strength by which they were now protected—if we were to ask the agent of our enemies, what measure would be the most likely to render their designs abortive, the answer would be the same in both cases, viz, the firm consolidation of every part of the empire.

There is another consideration well worth attention. Recollect what are the peculiar means by which we have been enabled to resist the unequalled and eccentric efforts of France, without any diminution, nay, with an increase, of our general prosperity—what, but the great commercial resources which we possess? A measure, then, which must communicate to such a mighty limb of the empire as Ireland all the commercial advantages which Great Britain possesses, which will open the

markets of the one country to the other, which will give them both the common use of their capital, must, by diffusing a large portion of wealth into Ireland, considerably increase the resources, and consequently the strength of the whole empire.

But it is not merely in this general view, that I think the question ought to be considered. We ought to look to it with a view peculiarly to the permanent interest and security of Ireland. When that country was threatened with the double danger of hostile attacks by enemies without, and of treason within, from what quarter did she derive the means of her deliverance?—from the naval force of Great Britain—from the voluntary exertions of her military of every description, not called for by law—and from her pecuniary resources, added to the loyalty and energy of the inhabitants of Ireland itself; of which it is impossible to speak with too much praise, and which shews how well they deserve to be called the brethren of Britons. Their own courage might, perhaps, have ultimately succeeded in repelling the dangers by which they were threatened, but it would have been after a long contest, and after having waded through seas of blood. Are we sure that the same ready and effectual assistance which we have happily afforded, on the present occasion, will be always equally within our power? Great Britain has always felt a common interest in the safety of Ireland; but that common interest was never so obvious and urgent as when the common enemy made her attack upon Great Britain, through the medium of Ireland, and when their attack upon Ireland went to deprive her of her connection with Great Britain, and to substitute in its stead the new government of the French republic. When that danger threatened Ireland, the purse of Great Britain was as open for the wants of Ireland, as for the necessities of England.

I do not, Sir, state these circumstances, as upbraiding Ireland for the benefits we have conferred; far from it: but I state them with pleasure, as shewing the friendship and good-will with which this country has acted towards her. But if struggles of this sort may and must return again; if the worst dangers are those which are yet to come, dangers which may be greater from being more

disguised; if those situations may arise when the same means of relief are not in our power, what is the remedy that reason and policy point out? It is to identify them with us; it is to make them a part of the same community, by giving them a full share of those accumulated blessings which are diffused throughout Great Britain; it is, in a word, by giving them a full participation of the wealth, the power, and the stability of the British empire. If then this measure comes recommended not only by the obvious defects of the system which now exists, but that it has also the pre-eminent recommendation of increasing the general power of the empire, and of guarding against future danger from the common enemy, we are next to consider it as to its effects upon the internal condition, of Ireland.

I know perfectly well, that, as long as Ireland is separated from Great Britain, any attempt on our part to provide measures which we might think salutary, as respecting questions of contending sects or parties, of the claimed rights of the catholics, or of the precautions necessary for the security of the protestants—I know that all these, though they may have been brought forward by the very persons who are the advocates of the final adjustment in 1782, were, in fact, attacks upon the independence of the Irish parliament, and attempts to usurp the right of deciding on points which can only be brought within our province by compact. Until the kingdoms are united, any attempt to make regulations here for the internal state of Ireland must certainly be a violation of her independence. But feeling as I do for their interests and their welfare, I cannot be inattentive to the events that are passing before me; I must therefore repeat, that whoever looks at the circumstances to which I have alluded; whoever considers that the enemy have shewn by their conduct, that they considered Ireland as the weakest and most vulnerable part of the empire; whoever reflects upon those dreadful and inexcusable cruelties instigated by the enemies of both countries, and upon those lamentable severities by which the exertions for the defence of Ireland were unhappily, but unavoidably, attended, and the necessity of which is itself one great aggravation

of the crimes and treasons which led to them, must feel that, as it now stands composed, in the hostile division of its sects, in the animosities existing between ancient settlers and original inhabitants, in the ignorance and want of civilization, which marks that country more than almost any other country in Europe, in the unfortunate prevalence of jacobin principles, arising from these causes, and augmenting their malignity, and which have produced that distressed state which we now deplore;—every one, I say, who reflects upon all these circumstances, must agree with me in thinking, that there is no cure but in the formation of a general imperial legislature, free alike from terror and from resentment, removed from the danger and agitation, uninfluenced by the prejudices, and uninflamed by the passions of that distracted country.

I know that it is impossible, if we wish to consider this subject properly, to consider it in any other point of view than as it affects the empire in general. I know that the interests of the two countries must be taken together, and that a man cannot speak as a true Englishman, unless he speaks as a true Irishman, nor as a true Irishman, unless he speaks as a true Englishman; but if it were possible to separate them, and I could consider myself as addressing you, not as interested for the empire at large, but for Ireland alone, I should say, that it would be indispensably necessary, for the sake of that country, to compose its present distractions by the adoption of another system—I should say, that the establishment of an imperial legislature was the only means of healing its wounds, and of restoring it to tranquillity. I must here take the liberty of alluding to some topics which were touched upon during the discussion of the former night.

Among the great and known defects of Ireland, one of the most prominent features is, its want of industry and a capital; how are those wants to be supplied, but by blending more closely with Ireland the industry and the capital of this country? But, above all, in the great leading distinction between the people of Ireland, (I mean their religious distinctions,) what is their situation?—The protestant feels that the claims of the catholics

threaten the existence of the protestant ascendancy; while, on the other hand, the great body of catholics feel the establishment of the national church, and their exclusion from the exercise of certain rights and privileges, a grievance. Between the two, it becomes a matter of difficulty in the minds of many persons, whether it would be better to listen only to the fears of the former, or to grant the claims of the latter.

I am well aware that the subject of religious distinction is a dangerous and delicate topic, especially when applied to a country such as Ireland, the situation of which is different in this respect from that of every other. Where the established religion of the state is the same as the general religion of the empire, and where the property of the country is in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons professing that established religion, while the religion of a great majority of the people is different, it is not easy to say, on general principles, what system of church establishment in such a country would be free from difficulty and inconvenience. By many I know it will be contended, that the religion professed by the majority of the people would, at least, be entitled to an equality of privileges. I have heard such an argument urged in this house; but those who apply it without qualification to the case of Ireland, forget surely the principles on which English interest and English connection has been established in that country, and on which its present legislature is formed. No man can say, that, in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the catholics, without endangering the state, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre.

On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion, or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable: first, when the conduct of the catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion, and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure—when these events take place, it is obvious that such a

question may be agitated in an united, imperial parliament, with much greater safety, than it could be in a separate legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary, after the union, to withhold from the catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed, if the protestant legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and imperial; and the catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint.

How far, in addition to this great and leading consideration, it may also be wise and practicable to accompany the measure by some mode of relieving the lower orders from the pressure of tithes, which, in many instances, operate at present as a great practical evil, or to make, under proper regulations, and without breaking in on the security of the present protestant establishment, an effectual and adequate provision for the catholic clergy, it is not now necessary to discuss. It is sufficient to say, that these and all other subordinate points connected with the same subject, are more likely to be permanently and satisfactorily settled by an united legislature, than by any local arrangements. On these grounds I contend, that with a view to providing an effectual remedy for the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, with a view of removing those causes which have endangered, and still endanger its security, the measure which I am now proposing promises to be more effectual than any other which can be devised; and on these grounds alone, if there existed no other, I should feel it my duty to submit it to the house.

But, Sir, though what I have thus stated relates most immediately to the great object of healing the dissensions, and providing for the internal tranquillity of Ireland, there are also other objects which, though comparatively with this of inferior importance, are yet in themselves highly material, and in a secondary view well worthy of attention.

I have heard it asked, when I pressed the measure, what are

the positive advantages that Ireland is to derive from it? To this very question I presume the considerations, which I have already urged, afford a sufficient answer. But, in fact, the question itself is to be considered in another view; and it will be found to bear some resemblance to a question which has been repeatedly put, by some of the gentlemen opposite to me, during the last six years. What are the advantages which Great Britain has gained by the present war with France?

To this, the brilliant successes of the British arms by sea and land, our unexampled naval victories over all our enemies, the solid acquisition of valuable territory, the general increase of our power, the progressive extension of our commerce, and a series of events more glorious than any that ever adorned the page of our history, afford at once an ample and a satisfactory answer. But there is another general answer which we have uniformly given, and which would alone be sufficient: it is, that we did not enter into this war for any purpose of ambition; our object was not to acquire, but to preserve; and in this sense, what we have gained by the war is, in one word, ALL that we should have lost without it; it is the preservation of our constitution, our independence, our honour, our existence as a nation.

In the same manner I might answer the question with respect to Ireland, I might enumerate the general advantages which Ireland would derive from the effects of the arrangement to which I have already referred—the protection which she will secure to herself in the hour of danger: the most effectual means of increasing her commerce and improving her agriculture, the command of English capital, the infusion of English manners and English industry, necessarily tending to ameliorate her condition, to accelerate the progress of internal civilization, and to terminate those feuds and dissensions which now distract the country, and which she does not possess, within herself, the power either to control or to extinguish. She would see the avenue to honours, to distinctions, and exalted situations in the general seat of empire, opened to all those whose abilities and talents enable them to indulge an honourable and laudable ambition.

But, independent of all these advantages, I might also answer, that the question is not what Ireland is to gain, but what she is to preserve; not merely how she may best improve her situation, but how she is to avert a pressing and immediate danger. In this view, what she gains is the preservation of all those blessings arising from the British constitution, and which are inseparable from her connections with Great Britain;—those blessings, of which it has long been the aim of France, in conjunction with domestic traitors, to deprive her, and on their ruins to establish (with all its attendant miseries and horrors) a jacobin republic, founded on French influence, and existing only in subserviency to France.

Such, Sir, would be the answer, if we direct our attention only to the question of general advantage. And here I should be inclined to stop; but since it has also been more particularly asked, what are the advantages which she is to gain, in point of commerce and manufactures, I am desirous of applying my answer more immediately and distinctly to that part of the subject; and as I know that the statement will carry more conviction with it to those who make the inquiry, if given in the words of the right honourable gentleman, to whom, and to whose opinions, I have had more than one occasion to advert in the course of this night, I will read you an extract from his recorded sentiments on the subject, in the year 1785, on this same memorable occasion of the commercial propositions. Speaking of a solid and unalterable compact between the two countries, speaking expressly of the peculiar importance of insuring the continuance of those commercial benefits, which she at that time held only at the discretion of this country, he says “The exportation of Irish products to England amounts to two millions and a half annually; and the exportation of British products to Ireland amounts to but one million.”

He then proceeds to reason upon the advantage which Ireland would derive, under such circumstances, from guarding against mutual prohibitions; and he accompanies the statement, which I have just read, with this observation—

“If, indeed, the adjustment were to take away the benefit

from Ireland, it would be a good cause for rejecting it; but, as it for ever confirms all the advantages we derived from our linen trade, and binds England from making any law that can be injurious to it, surely gentlemen who regard that trade, and *whose fortunes and rents depend on its prosperity, will not entertain a moment's doubt about embracing the offer.*"

Such was the reasoning of the Irish chancellor of the exchequer, which I consider to have been perfectly just. With reference to his late opinions, I do not think I can more forcibly reply to a person who signs his name to propositions which declare, that the ruin of the linen trade of Ireland is likely to be the consequence of an union, than by opposing to him his own opinion. I shall be able to strengthen the former opinion of that gentleman, by stating, that the progress that has been made in commercial advantages to Ireland since 1785, has been such as to render his argument still more applicable. What is the nature of that commerce, explained by the same person in so concise and forcible a manner, that I am happy to use his own statement? He does not confine himself to the gross amount, but gives the articles in detail——

" Britain," he says, " imports annually from us two million five hundred thousand pounds of our products, all, or very nearly all, duty free, and covenants never to lay a duty on them. We import about a million of hers, and raise a revenue on almost every article of it, and reserve the power of continuing that revenue. She exports to us salt for our fisheries and provisions; hops, which we cannot grow; coals, which we cannot raise; tin, which we have not; and bark, which we cannot get elsewhere: and all these without reserving any duty."

I will not tire the patience of the house by reading farther extracts; but the right honourable gentleman's whole speech, in like manner, points out the advantages of the commercial propositions (at that time under consideration) as a ground-work of a compact between the two countries, in 1785, on commercial subjects. But how stands the case now? The trade is at this time infinitely more advantageous to Ireland. It will be proved,

from the documents which I hold in my hand, as far as relates to the mere interchange of manufactures, that the manufactures exported to Ireland from Great Britain, in 1797, very little exceeded a million sterling (the articles of produce amount to nearly the same sum) while Great Britain, on the other hand, imported from Ireland to the amount of near three millions in the manufactured articles of linen and linen yarn, and between two and three millions in provisions and cattle, besides corn and other articles of produce.

In addition to these articles, there are other circumstances of advantage to Ireland. Articles which are essential to her trade and to her subsistence, or serve as raw materials for her manufactures, are sent from hence free of duty. It is expressly stated, on the same authority, that all that we take back from Ireland was liable to a duty in that country on their exports: the increasing produce of the chief article of their manufacture, and four-fifths of her whole export trade, are to be ascribed, not to that *Independent Legislature*, but to the liberality of the British parliament. It is by the free admission of linens for our market, and the bounties granted by the British parliament on its re-export, that the linen trade has been brought to the height at which we now see it. To the parliament of this country, then, it is now owing, that a market has been opened for her linen to the amount of three millions. By the bounty we give to Ireland, we afford her a double market for that article, and (what is still more striking and important) we have prevented a competition against her, arising from the superior cheapness of the linen manufactures of the continent, by subjecting their importation to a duty of thirty per cent. Nothing would more clearly shew what would be the danger to Ireland from the competition in all its principal branches of the linen trade, than the simple fact, that we even now import foreign linens, under this heavy duty, to an amount equal to a seventh part of all that Ireland is able to send us, with the preference that has been stated. By this arrangement alone, we must, therefore, be considered, either as foregoing between seven and eight hundred thousand pounds per annum in reve-

nue, which we should collect if we chose to levy the same duty on all linens, Irish as well as foreign; or, on the other hand, as sacrificing, perhaps, at least a million sterling in the price paid for those articles, by the subjects of this country, which might be saved, if we allowed the importation of all linen, foreign as well as Irish, equally free from duty.

The present measure is, however, in its effects, calculated not merely for a confirmation of the advantages on which the person, to whom I have alluded, has insisted. It is obvious that a fuller and more perfect connection of the two countries, from whatever cause it may arise, must produce a greater facility and freedom of commercial intercourse, and ultimately tend to the advantage of both. The benefits to be derived to either country, from such an arrangement, must indeed, in a great measure, be gradual; but they are not on that account the less certain, and they cannot be stated in more forcible language than in that used in the speech to which I have referred——

“Gentlemen undervalue the reduction of British duties on our manufactures. I agree with them it may not operate soon, but we are to look forward to a final settlement, and it is impossible but that in time, with as good climate, equal natural powers, cheaper food, and fewer taxes, we must be able to sell to them. When commercial jealousy shall be banished by final settlement, and trade take its natural and steady course, the kingdoms will cease to look to rivalry, each will make that fabric which it can do cheapest, and buy from the other what it cannot make so advantageously. Labour will be then truly employed to profit, not diverted by bounties, jealousies, or legislative interference, from its natural and beneficial course. This system will attain its real object, consolidating the strength of the remaining parts of the empire, by encouraging the communications of their market among themselves, with preference to every part against all strangers!”

I am, at least, therefore, secure from the design of appearing to deliver any partial or commercial opinion of my own, when I thus state, on the authority of a person the best informed, and

who then judged dispassionately, both the infinite importance to Ireland of securing permanently the great commercial advantages which she now holds at the discretion of Great Britain, and the additional benefit which she would derive from any settlement which opened to her gradually a still more free and complete commercial intercourse with this country. And while I state thus strongly the commercial advantages to the sister kingdom, I have no alarm lest I should excite any sentiment of jealousy here. I know that the inhabitants of Great Britain wish well to the prosperity of Ireland; that, if the kingdoms are really and solidly united, they feel that to increase the commercial wealth of one country is not to diminish that of the other, but to increase the strength and power of both. But to justify that sentiment, we must be satisfied that the wealth we are pouring into the lap of Ireland is not every day liable to be snatched from us, and thrown into the scale of the enemy. If, therefore, Ireland is to continue, as I trust it will for ever, an essential part of the integral strength of the British empire; if her strength is to be permanently ours, and our strength to be hers, neither I nor any English minister, can ever be deterred, by the fear of creating jealousy in the hearts of Englishmen, from stating the advantages of a closer connection, or from giving any assistance to the commercial prosperity of that kingdom.

If ever, indeed, I should have the misfortune to witness the melancholy moment when such principles must be abandoned, when all hope of seeing Ireland permanently and securely connected with this country shall be at an end, I shall, at least, have the consolation of knowing, that it will not be the want of temper or forbearance, of conciliation, of kindness, or of full explanation on our part, which will have produced an event so fatal to Ireland, and so dangerous to Great Britain. If ever the over-bearing power of prejudice and passion shall produce that fatal consequence, it will too late be perceived and acknowledged, that all the great commercial advantages which Ireland at present enjoys, and which are continually increasing, are to be ascribed to the liberal conduct, the fostering care of the

British empire, extended to the sister kingdom as to a part of ourselves, and not (as has been fallaciously and vainly pretended) to any thing which has been done, or can be done, by the independent power of her own separate legislature.

I have thus, Sir, endeavoured to state to you the reasons, why I think this measure advisable; why I wish it to be proposed to the parliament of Ireland, with temper and fairness; and why it appears to me entitled, at least, to a calm and dispassionate discussion in that kingdom. I am aware, however, that objections have been urged against the measure, some of which are undoubtedly plausible, and have been but too successful in their influence on the Irish parliament. Of these objections I shall now proceed, as concisely as possible, to take some notice.

The first is, what I heard alluded to by the honourable gentleman* opposite to me, when his Majesty's message was brought down; namely—That the parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed, without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. But, Sir, I am led to suppose, from what the honourable gentleman afterwards stated, that he made this objection, rather by way of deprecating the discussion of the question, than as entertaining the smallest doubt upon it himself. If, however, the honourable gentleman, or any other gentleman on the other side of the house, should seriously entertain a doubt on the subject, I shall be ready to discuss it with him distinctly, either this night or at any future opportunity. For the present, I will assume that no man can deny the competency of the parliament of Ireland (representing as it does, in the language of our constitution, "*lawfully, fully, and freely, all the estates of the people of the realm,*") to make laws to bind that people, unless he is disposed to distinguish that parliament from the parliament of Great Britain, and, while he maintains the independence of the Irish legislature, yet denies to it the lawful and essential powers of

* Mr. Sheridan.

parliament. No man, who maintains the parliament of Ireland to be co-equal with our own, can deny its competency on this question, unless he means to go the length of denying, at the same moment, the whole of the authority of the parliament of Great Britain—to shake every principle of legislation—and to maintain, that all the acts passed, and every thing done by parliament, or sanctioned by its authority, however sacred, however beneficial, is neither more nor less than an act of usurpation. He must not only deny the validity of the union between Scotland and England, but he must deny the authority of every one of the proceedings of the united legislature since the union; nay, Sir, he must go still farther, and deny the authority under which we now sit and deliberate here as a house of parliament; Of course, he must deny the validity of the adjustment of 1782, and call in question every measure which he has himself been the most forward to have enforced. This point, Sir, is of so much importance, that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass, without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended, that parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognising a principle, the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized state.—I mean the principle, that parliament cannot adopt any measure new in its nature, and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for directions. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the principality of Wales, or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that parliament ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the crown, was a breach of treaty and an act of usurpation.

If we turn to Ireland itself, what do gentlemen think of the

power of that parliament, which, without any fresh delegation from its protestant constituents, associates to itself all the catholic electors, and thus destroys a fundamental distinction on which it was formed? God forbid that I should object to or blame any of these measures! I am only stating the extent to which the principle, that parliament has no authority to decide upon the present measure, will lead; and, if it be admitted in one case, it must be admitted in all. Will any man say, that (although a protestant parliament in Ireland, chosen exclusively by protestant constituents, has, by its own inherent power, and without consulting those constituents, admitted and comprehended the catholics who were till then, in fact, a separate community) that parliament cannot associate itself with another protestant community, represented by a protestant parliament, having one interest with itself, and similar in its laws, its constitution, and its established religion? What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of parliamentary reform, and particularly such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans, without contending that, as a member of parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point, in the manner I do, were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the subject of government which have lately become too prevalent in the world. It may, in fact, be traced to that gross perversion of the principles of all political society, which rests on the supposition that there exists continually in every government a sovereignty *in abeyance* (as it were) on the part of the people, ready to be called forth on every occasion, or ra-

ther, on every pretence, when it may suit the purposes of the party or faction who are the advocates of this doctrine to suppose an occasion for its exertion. It is in these false principles that are contained the seeds of all the misery, desolation, and ruin, which in the present day have spread themselves over so large a proportion of the habitable globe.

These principles, Sir, are, at length, so well known and understood in their practical effects, that they can no longer hope for one enlightened or intelligent advocate, when they appear in their true colours. Yet, with all the horror we all feel, in common with the rest of the world, at the effect of them, with all the confirmed and increasing love and veneration which we feel towards the constitution of our country, founded as it is, both in theory and experience, on principles directly the reverse, there are too many among us, who, while they abhor and reject such opinions, when presented to them in their naked deformity, suffer them in a more disguised shape to be gradually infused into their minds, and insensibly to influence and bias their sentiments and arguments on the greatest and most important discussions. This concealed poison is now more to be dreaded than any open attempt to support such principles by argument, or to enforce them by arms. No society, whatever be its particular form, can long subsist, if this principle is once admitted. In every government, there must reside somewhere a supreme, absolute, and unlimited authority. This is equally true of every lawful monarchy—of every aristocracy—of every pure democracy (if indeed such a form of government ever has existed, or ever can exist)—and of those mixed constitutions formed and compounded from the others, which we are justly inclined to prefer to any of them. In all these governments, indeed alike, that power may by possibility be abused; but whether the abuse is such as to justify and call for the interference of the people collectively, or more properly speaking, of any portion of it, must always be an extreme case, and a question of the greatest and most perilous responsibility, not in law only, but in conscience and in duty, to all those who either act upon it themselves, or

persuade others to do so. But no provision for such a case ever has been or can be made beforehand; it forms no chapter in any known code of laws, it can find no place in any system of human jurisprudence. But, above all, if such a principle can make no part of any established constitution, not even of those where the government is so framed as to be most liable to the abuse of its powers, it will be preposterous indeed to suppose that it can be admitted in one where those powers are so distributed and balanced as to furnish the best security against the probability of such an abuse. Shall that principle be sanctioned as a necessary part of the best government, which cannot be admitted to exist as an established check even upon the worst! Pregnant as it is with danger and confusion, shall it be received and authorized in proportion as every reason, which can ever make it necessary to recur to it, is not likely to exist? Yet, Sir, I know not how it is, that, in proportion as we are less likely to have occasion for so desperate a remedy, in proportion as a government is so framed as to provide within itself the best guard and control on the exercise of every branch of authority, to furnish the means of preventing or correcting every abuse of power, and to secure, by its own natural operation, a due attention to the interest and feelings of every part of the community, in that very proportion persons have been found perverse enough to imagine, that such a constitution admits and recognises, as a part of it, that which is inconsistent with the nature of any government, and, above all, inapplicable to our own.

I have said more, Sir, upon this subject than I should have thought necessary, if I had not felt that this false and dangerous mockery of the *sovereignty of the people* is in truth one of the chief elements of jacobinism, one of the favourite impostures to mislead the understanding, and to flatter and inflame the passions of the mass of mankind, who have not the opportunity of examining and exposing it, and that, as such, on every occasion, and in every shape in which it appears, it ought to be combated and resisted by every friend to civil order, and to the peace and happiness of mankind.

Sir, the next and not the least prevalent objection, is one which is contained in words which are an appeal to a natural and laudable, but what I must call an erroneous and mistaken, sense of national pride. It is an appeal to the generous and noble passions of a nation easily inflamed under any supposed attack upon its honour, I mean the attempt to represent the question of an union by compact between the parliaments of the two kingdoms as a question involving the independence of Ireland.—It has been said, that no compensation could be made to any country for the surrender of its national independence. Sir, on this, as well as on every part of the question, I am desirous gentlemen should come closely to the point, that they should sift it to the bottom, and ascertain upon what grounds and principles their opinion really rests. Do they mean to maintain that in any humiliating, in any degrading sense of the word which can be acted upon practically as a rule, and which can lead to any useful conclusion, that at any time when the government of any two separate countries unite in forming one more extensive empire, the individuals who composed either of the former narrow societies are afterwards less members of an independent country, or to any valuable and useful purpose less possessed of political freedom or civil happiness, than they were before? It must be obvious to every gentleman who will look at the subject, in tracing the histories of all the countries, the most proud of their present existing independence, of all the nations in Europe, there is not one that could exist in the state in which it now stands, if that principle had been acted upon by our forefathers; and Europe must have remained to this hour in a state of ignorance and barbarism, from the perpetual warfare of independent and petty states. In the instance of our own country, it would be a superfluous waste of time to enumerate the steps by which all its parts were formed into one kingdom; but will any man in general assert, that in all the different unions which have formed the principal states of Europe, their inhabitants have become less free, that they have had less of which to be proud, less scope for their own exertions, than they had in their former situation? If

this doctrine is to be generally maintained, what becomes of the situation at this hour of any one county of England, or of any one county of Ireland, now united under the independent parliament of that kingdom? If it be pushed to its full extent, it is obviously incompatible with all civil society. As the former principle of the sovereignty of the people strikes at the foundation of all governments, so this is equally hostile to all political confederacy, and mankind must be driven back to what is called the state of nature.

But while I combat this general and abstract principle, which would operate as an objection to every union between separate states, on the ground of the sacrifice of independence, do I mean to contend that there is in no case just ground for such a sentiment? Far from it: it may become, on many occasions, the first duty of a free and generous people. If there exists a country which contains within itself the means of military protection, the naval force necessary for its defence, which furnishes objects of industry sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants, and pecuniary resources adequate to maintaining, with dignity, the rank which it has attained among the nations of the world; if, above all, it enjoys the blessings of internal content and tranquillity, and possesses a distinct constitution of its own, the defects of which, if any, it is within itself capable of correcting; and if that constitution be equal, if not superior, to that of any other in the world, or (which is nearly the same thing) if those who live under it believe it to be so, and fondly cherish that opinion, I can indeed well understand that such a country must be jealous of any measure, which, even by its own consent, under the authority of its own lawful government, is to associate it as a part of a larger and more extensive empire.

But, Sir, if, on the other hand, it should happen that there be a country which, against the greatest of all dangers that threaten its peace and security, has not adequate means of protecting itself without the aid of another nation; if that other be a neighbouring and kindred nation, speaking the same language, whose laws, whose customs and habits are the same in principle,

but carried to a greater degree of perfection, with a more extensive commerce, and more abundant means of acquiring and diffusing national wealth; the stability of whose government—the excellence of whose constitution, is more than ever the admiration and envy of Europe, and of which the very country of which we are speaking can only boast an inadequate and imperfect resemblance;—under such circumstances, I would ask, what conduct would be prescribed by every rational principle of dignity, of honour, or of interest? I would ask, whether this is not a faithful description of the circumstances which ought to dispose Ireland to an union?—Whether Great Britain is not precisely the nation with which, on these principles, a country, situated as Ireland is, would desire to unite? Does an union, under such circumstances, by free consent, and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join, for their common benefit, in one empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connection to render both invincible?

Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo

Nec nova regna peto; paribus se legibus ambæ

Invictæ gentes æterna in fœdera mittant.

Sir, I have nearly stated all that is necessary for me to trouble the house with; there are, however, one or two other objections which I wish not entirely to pass over; one of them is, a general notion that an union with Great Britain must necessarily increase one of the great evils of Ireland, by producing depopulation in many parts of the country, and by increasing greatly the number of absentees. I do not mean to deny that this effect would, to a limited extent, take place during a part of the year; but I think it will not be difficult for me to prove, that this circumstance will be more than counterbalanced by the operation of the system in other respects.

If it be true that this measure has an inevitable tendency to ad-

mit the introduction of that British capital which is most likely to give life to all the operations of commerce, and to all the improvements of agriculture; if it be that, which above all other considerations is most likely to give security, quiet, and internal repose to Ireland; if it is likely to remove the chief bar to the internal advancement of wealth and of civilization, by a more intimate intercourse with England; if it is more likely to communicate from hence those habits which distinguish this country, and which, by a continued gradation, unite the highest and the lowest orders of the community without a chasm in any part of the system; if it is not only likely to invite (as I have already said) English capital to set commerce in motion, but to offer it the use of new markets, to open fresh resources of wealth and industry, can wealth, can industry, can civilization increase among the whole bulk of the people without much more than counterbalancing the partial effect of the removal of the few individuals who, for a small part of the year, would follow the seat of legislation? If, notwithstanding the absence of parliament from Dublin, it would still remain the centre of education and of the internal commerce of a country increasing in improvement; if it would still remain the seat of legal discussion, which must always increase with an increase of property and occupation, will it be supposed, with a view even to the interests of those whose partial interests have been most successfully appealed to; with a view either to the respectable body of the bar, to the merchant, or shopkeeper, of Dublin (if it were possible to suppose that a transaction of this sort ought to be referred to that single criterion) that they would not find their proportionate share of advantage in the general advantage of the state? Let it be remembered also, that if the transfer of the seat of legislature may call from Ireland to England the members of the united parliament, yet, after the union, property, influence and consideration in Ireland will lead, as much as in Great Britain, to all the objects of imperial ambition; and there must, consequently, exist a new incitement to persons to acquire property in that country, and to those who possess it, to reside there, and to

cultivate the good opinion of those with whom they live, and to extend and improve their influence and connections.

But, Sir, I need not dwell longer on argument, however it may satisfy my own mind, because we can on this question refer to experience. I see every gentleman anticipates that I allude to Scotland. What has been the result of the union there? An union, give me leave to say, as much opposed, and by much the same arguments, prejudices, and misconceptions, as are urged at this moment; creating too the same alarms, and provoking the same outrages, as have lately taken place in Dublin. Look at the metropolis of Scotland: the population of Edinburgh has been more than doubled since the union, and a new city added to the old. But we may be told, that Edinburgh has engrossed all the commerce of that country, and has those advantages which Dublin cannot expect. Yet while Edinburgh, deprived of its parliament, but retaining, as Dublin would retain, its courts of justice; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the resort of those whose circumstances would not permit them to visit a distant metropolis; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the seat of national education, while Edinburgh has baffled all the predictions of that period, what has been the situation of Glasgow? The population of Glasgow, since the union, has increased in the proportion of between five and six to one: look at its progress in manufactures; look at its general advantages, and tell me what ground there is, judging by experience in aid of theory, for those gloomy apprehensions which have been so industriously excited.

There remains, Sir, another general line of argument, which I have already anticipated, and I hope answered, that the commercial privileges now enjoyed by Ireland, and to which it owes so much of its prosperity, would be less secure than at present. I have given an answer to that already, by stating, that they are falsely imputed to the independence of the Irish parliament, for that they are, in fact, owing to the exercise of the voluntary discretion of the British parliament, unbound by compact, prompted only by its natural disposition to consider the interests of Ireland

the same as its own; and if that has been done while Ireland is only united to us in the imperfect and precarious manner in which it is, while it has a separate parliament, notwithstanding the commercial jealousies of our own manufacturers; if under these circumstances we have done so, if we have done so with no other connection than that which now subsists, and while Ireland has no share in our representation, what fresh ground can there be for apprehension, when she will have her proportionate weight in the legislature, and will be united with us as closely as Lancashire or Yorkshire, or any other county in Great Britain?

Sir, I have seen it under the same authority to which I am sorry so often to advert, that the linen trade would be injured, and that there will be no security for its retaining its present advantages. I have already stated to you (and with that very authority in my favour) that those advantages are at present precarious, and that their security can only arise from compact with Great Britain. Such a compact this measure would establish in the most solemn manner; but besides this, Sir, the natural policy of this country, not merely its experienced liberality, but the identity of interests after an union, would offer a security worth a thousand compacts.

Sir, the only other general topic of objection is that, upon which great pains have been taken to raise an alarm in Ireland—the idea that the main principle of the measure was to subject Ireland to a load of debt and an increase of taxes, and to expose her to the consequences of all our alleged difficulties and supposed necessities.

Sir, I hope the zeal, the spirit, and the liberal and enlarged policy of this country, has given ample proof that it is not from a pecuniary motive that we seek an union. If it is not desirable on the grounds I have stated, it cannot be recommended for the mere purpose of taxation; but to quiet any jealousy on this subject, here again let us look to Scotland: Is there any instance where, with 45 members on her part and 513 on ours, that part of the united kingdom has paid more than its proportion to the general burdens? Is it then, Sir, any ground of apprehension that we

are likely to tax Ireland more heavily when she becomes associated with ourselves? To tax in its due proportion the whole of the empire, to the utter exclusion of the idea of the predominance of one part of society over another, is the great characteristic of British finance, as equality of laws is of the British constitution.

But, Sir, in addition to this, if we come to the details of this proposition, it is in our power to fix, for any number of years which shall be thought fit, the proportion by which the contribution of Ireland to the expenses of the state, shall be regulated; that these proportions shall not be such as would make a contribution greater than the necessary amount of its own present necessary expenses as a separate kingdom; and even after that limited period, the proportion of the whole contribution from time to time might be made to depend on the comparative produce, in each kingdom, of such general taxes as might be thought to afford the best criterion of their respective wealth. Or, what I should hope would be found practicable, the system of internal taxation in each country might gradually be so equalized and assimilated, on the leading articles, as to make all rules of specific proportion unnecessary, and to secure, that Ireland shall never be taxed but in proportion as we tax ourselves.

The application of these principles, however, will form matter of future discussion—I mention them only as strongly shewing, from the misrepresentation which has taken place on this part of the subject, how incumbent it is upon the house to receive these propositions, and to adopt, after due deliberation such resolutions as may record to Ireland the terms upon which we are ready to meet her: and, in the mean time, let us wait, not without impatience, but without dissatisfaction, for that moment, when the effect of reason and discussion may reconcile the minds of men in that kingdom to a measure which I am sure will be found as necessary for their peace and happiness, as it will be conducive to the general security and advantage of the British empire.

Sir, it remains for me only to lay these resolutions before the

house, wishing that the more detailed discussion of them may be reserved to a future day.

Resolved, “First, That in order to promote and secure the essential interests of Great Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire, it will be advisable to concur in such measures as may best tend to unite the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland into one kingdom, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions, as may be established by acts of the respective parliaments of his Majesty’s said kingdoms.

“Second, That it appears to this committee that it would be fit to propose as the first article to serve as a basis of the said union, that the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall, upon a day to be agreed upon, be united into one kingdom, by the name of the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*.

“Third, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the succession to the monarchy and the imperial crown of the said united Kingdoms shall continue limited and settled, in the same manner as the imperial crown of the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland now stands limited and settled, according to the existing laws, and to the terms of the union between England and Scotland.

“Fourth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the said united kingdom be represented in one and the same parliament, to be stiled the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that such a number of lords spiritual and temporal, and such a number of members of the house of commons as shall be hereafter agreed upon by acts of the respective parliaments as aforesaid, shall sit and vote in the said parliament on the part of Ireland, and shall be summoned, chosen, and returned, in such manner as shall be fixed by an act of the parliament of Ireland previous to the said union; and that every member hereafter to sit and vote in the said parliament of the united kingdom shall, until the said parliament

shall otherwise provide, take and subscribe the same oaths, and make the same declaration, as are by law required to be taken, subscribed, and made, by the members of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland.

“ Fifth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the churches of England and Ireland, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, shall be preserved as now by law established.

“ Sixth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that his Majesty's subjects in Ireland shall at all times hereafter be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing in respect of trade and navigation, in all ports and places belonging to Great Britain, and in all cases with respect to which treaties shall be made by his Majesty, his heirs, or successors, with any foreign power, as his Majesty's subjects in Great Britain ; that no duty shall be imposed on the import or export between Great Britain and Ireland of any articles now duty-free ; and that on other articles there shall be established, for a time to be limited, such a moderate rate of equal duties as shall, previous to the union, be agreed upon and approved by the respective parliaments, subject, after the expiration of such limited time, to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case to be increased ; that all articles which may at any time hereafter be imported into Great Britain from foreign parts, shall be importable through either kingdom into the other, subject to the like duties and regulations as if the same were imported directly from foreign parts ; that where any articles, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom, are subject to any internal duty in one kingdom, such countervailing duties (over and above any duties on import to be fixed as aforesaid) shall be imposed, as shall be necessary to prevent any inequality in that respect ; and that all other matters of trade and commerce other than the foregoing, and than such others as may before the union be specially agreed upon for the due encouragement of the agriculture and manufactures of the respective kingdoms, shall remain to be regulated from time to time by the united parliament.

“ Seventh, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose

that the charge arising from the payment of the interest or sinking fund for the reduction of the principle of the debt incurred in either kingdom before the union, shall continue to be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expenses of the united kingdom, in peace or war, shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according to such proportions as shall be established by the respective parliaments previous to the union; and that after the expiration of the time to be so limited, the proportions shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the union.

“ Eighth, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose that all laws in force at the time of the union, and that all the courts of civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the respective kingdoms, shall remain as now by law established within the same, subject only to such alterations or regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the parliament of the united kingdom to require.

“ That the foregoing resolutions be laid before his Majesty, with an humble address, assuring his Majesty that we have proceeded with the utmost attention to the consideration of the important objects recommended to us in his Majesty's gracious message:

“ That we entertain a firm persuasion that a complete and entire union between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution, and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth, and commerce, of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestic enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire.

“ Impressed with these considerations, we feel it our duty humbly to lay before his Majesty such propositions as appear to us best

calculated to form the basis of such a settlement, leaving it to his Majesty's wisdom, at such time and in such manner as his Majesty, in his parental solicitude for the happiness of his people, shall judge fit, to communicate these propositions to his parliament of Ireland, with whom we shall be at all times ready to concur in all such measures as may be found most conducive to the accomplishment of this great and salutary work. And we trust that, after full and mature consideration, such a settlement may be framed and established, by the deliberate consent of the parliaments of both kingdoms, as may be conformable to the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of his Majesty's faithful subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, and may unite them inseparably in the full enjoyment of the blessings of our free and invaluable constitution, in the support of the honour and dignity of his Majesty's crown, and in the preservation and advancement of the welfare and prosperity of the whole British empire."

The question was carried for the Speaker's leaving the chair,

Ayes 140

Noes 15

and the House then went into a committee upon the resolutions.

April 19, 1799.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the report of the secret committee relative to seditious societies,

MR. PITT rose, and spoke in substance as follows :

It is not my intention, Sir, on the present occasion, to detain the committee by enlarging upon the circumstances stated in the report, which is now the subject of consideration. Those circumstances detailed in the report itself are so important in their nature, and so plainly and forcibly stated, that to dwell upon them would be to weaken rather than to add to the impression they are calculated to make. I shall content myself, therefore, with laying before you the outline of the measure, which it is my in-

tention to propose as the ground of the resolutions of the committee, on which, if they should meet its concurrence, will follow a motion, that the chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in bills to enact their provisions. Should these propositions be adopted, another opportunity will occur for the discussion of their details. This much, however, I think I may venture to say, that there cannot be two opinions as to the necessity of continuing and enforcing those wise and salutary measures of precaution to which we are indebted for our safety, and by which we have been enabled to repress the efforts of the most desperate, wicked, and cruel conspiracy against our liberties, our constitution, and our peace, that is to be found in the history of this country. From the report of the committee, we perceive that among other things the utmost advantage has resulted from that great measure of precaution, the act empowering his Majesty to secure and detain persons suspected of conspiring against his person and government—a measure which has been attended with the most beneficial effects at moments the most critical, in breaking up the designs of the conspirers, when they approached nearly to the period of their execution. Previous even to the report, in which its necessity is so satisfactorily developed, the facts notorious to the world would have been sufficient to justify an application to parliament for prolonging the duration of the act suspending the *habeas corpus*. Following up at the same time the suggestions in the report, the first motion I shall have the honour to propose will be to continue that measure, at the same time, adding to it a provision to render it more effectual, a provision founded as well upon its general propriety, as upon the particular circumstances which the report has explained. What I allude to is, to adopt a regulation empowering his Majesty to transfer persons arrested under this act to any place within the kingdom which may be deemed most eligible. I do not mean to enlarge upon the policy of such a provision. I shall only observe, that it will be notorious to the committee, from the report under consideration, and from another report lately presented to the house, that

one of the principal features of that conspiracy which has been prosecuted in this country, but more particularly in the sister kingdom, where it actually led to so much calamity and bloodshed, has been that the designs of the conspirators have continued to be conducted under the direction of persons in custody on charges of being its authors, or guilty upon their own confession. How far the case here has been similar to that I have stated, it is needless at present to enquire. It will hardly be denied, that circumstances are such as to require that all doubts should be removed respecting the power of his Majesty to transfer persons in this situation to the most safe and proper place of confinement, and likewise to enable government to detain in custody here persons arrested in Ireland in the circumstances I have described. This provision arises out of the message received from his Majesty, respecting the persons brought from the sister kingdom, to be detained in confinement in Great Britain.

I feel likewise that it will not be sufficient to continue and enforce the laws already adopted for our security, if we did not adopt some precaution against the particular character of the mischief against which we are called upon to guard. I allude to that point so clearly established by the most powerful body of evidence before us, the existence of secret societies totally unknown in the history of this or any other country. Impressed with the observation in the report of the committee, that in the great struggle we maintain against jacobinism it is necessary to watch the symptoms of the malady, and to adapt the remedy to the appearance it assumes, we must feel ourselves bound to accommodate our precautions to the evil which we have discovered. It will at the same time be recorded to the honour of the British parliament, that while it did not neglect the salutary precautions which circumstances imperiously dictated, it did not pass beyond the bounds of that necessity; that, equally firm and temperate, it has recollected what was to be yielded to safety, and what was due to the constitution, that it might with just discernment and moderation accommodate the precaution to the danger.

Considering the inveterate spirit and the invincible persever-

ance of the enemy, with whom we have to contend, I do not think that any one measure could be warranted as sufficient to carry the constitution safe through that mighty struggle we have to maintain; to that haven of security and peace, which after a period of exertion and of perseverance, more or less protracted, we have a confident hope of attaining. For this arduous contest, however, be it shorter or be it longer, we must be prepared; we must be determined firmly to abide by the cause we have embraced, vigorously to continue the efforts we have exerted, to follow up wisely and vigilantly the provisions which we have hitherto employed, unless we are contented to yield to the superior vigilance, energy and perseverance of an implacable enemy, the pre-eminent blessings which we enjoy.

It is the duty of parliament, then, carefully to watch the symptoms of the malady by which we are assailed. The point which to-day seems most urgently to challenge our attention, is that of the secret societies I have mentioned, all of which possess a common distinguishing character. Wherever they have existed, they have been animated by the same spirit, dedicated to the same objects, and known by the same effects. They have spread themselves in Great Britain, in Ireland, throughout Europe. In the sister kingdom, we have seen them not merely threatening the mischiefs with which they are fraught, but at one moment scattering their baleful consequences, and openly attempting the overthrow of all established government. Even here, notwithstanding the prevalent loyalty of the great mass of the people, and the powerful obstacles with which they have had to contend, we have seen that invincible perseverance in a bad cause by which the spirit of jacobinism is peculiarly characterized, while in other parts of Europe, the existence of these secret societies has uniformly been the forerunner, or the attendant of the progress of French principles and the ravage of French arms.

These societies, too, are in their nature totally repugnant to the genius of this constitution, and strange to the habits of this nation. They are clearly of foreign growth; and, while we are bound to discourage them, we can employ with the more sa-

tisfaction the strong measures which are necessary to their suppression, because we must be sensible that we do not trench upon the principles or the spirit of that liberty we inherit from our ancestors;—that we do not impair those privileges which give sanction to the great right of petition to all recognised classes of men, and with none of which those new descriptions of persons can at all be confounded. Among the societies of this nature are *The Corresponding Society*, *The United English*, *The United Scots*, *The United Britons*, and *The United Irish*. These societies are now so clearly proved to be such an abuse of the privileges of this constitution—so entirely inconsistent with all government, that all must agree that they ought to be suppressed. In doing this there is one consideration which we ought to keep in view: we must be aware that, from the very outset, the leaders of these baneful societies distinctly anticipated in their designs all those horrors and calamities which have since been developed in their progress. Many individuals, however, there must have been who, not understanding the purposes for which they were to co-operate, or not foreseeing the evils to which they would lead, were lightly and inconsiderately drawn in to become members of such societies. Adopting this distinction, then, it is intended that the measures for suppressing these bodies shall only be prospective, that they shall not aim at punishment, but prevention. We shall do our duty in setting a mark on the house where the pestilential contagion prevails, and then let those who enter perish. In the first instance it shall be the mild and forgiving policy of the measures proposed, to separate the misguided from the criminal. At the same time I have no hesitation in saying, that after experiencing this signal exercise of mercy and forbearance, those who shall continue members of those societies, contract the guilt of adhering to designs of deliberate treason. As, however, the great object is to detect and to punish those who may be guilty of this offence, in its nature so deep and atrocious, I flatter myself that a summary conviction, followed by a summary punishment, would answer the desired effect. My intention, therefore, is to propose, that if any person after a day to be fixed shall continue

a member of such societies, they shall, upon summary conviction before a magistrate, be liable to a certain fine, to be summarily inflicted. Looking at the description of persons who in general compose these associations, I hope that this regulation will be attended with the most salutary effect. Persuaded that even this simple mode of proceeding, and this very gentle punishment will be effectual, I am happy to propose, as a remedy for the evil, a measure which so little trenches upon those bulwarks of liberty which it must be our wish to preserve. At the same time, while in a political view it may attain the object desired, the punishment it provides in a moral view, is by no means commensurate to the guilt which it affects.

That there are degrees of guilt among the members of these societies is obvious ; it is necessary to keep this distinction before us. To be merely one of the herd may not be so criminal as to take an active part in promoting the illegal purposes for which the illegal association is formed. I should propose therefore to give an option, either to proceed by summary conviction and fine, or by way of indictment in any court of record, leaving it to the discretion of the court to punish the offenders by fine or imprisonment, or, in cases of greater aggravation, by transportation.

It will be necessary likewise to provide, that the law shall not be confined in its operation to the societies already known by the names enumerated, but to societies of the same kind, and directed to the same objects, by whatever varying appellations they may be distinguished. Of this kind are those where there exists an unlawful and wicked engagement of mutual fidelity and secrecy, such as we have seen so much prevail. It shall apply to those where the same illegal bond prevails, which unhappily has been found to have so great an influence on the weak and ignorant minds of the deluded people ; where is practised that mysterious secrecy in the appointment of the members and the committees, the president, secretaries, and the whole management of the affairs of the society. All those associations, where such practices exist, shall be declared unlawful. I need not hesitate

to propose to accompany this provision with one which is necessary to its effect. This is to subject the masters of those houses where such meetings assemble, whether public or private, to a fine. Persons who have been members, and withdrawing themselves before a given day, to be exempted from the operation of the law. These regulations, in themselves so perfectly free from the imputation of severity, will, I hope, be sufficient to secure the objects we have in view. Such will be the first branch of the second measure which I feel it my duty to propose.

The next part of the bill would be intended to remedy an evil of inferior importance, one which in a certain degree must fall under the daily observation of every man who hears me, and which has formed a part of the plan so incessantly pursued, of perverting the understanding, depraving the minds, and corrupting the morals of the people of this country:—I allude to the Debating Societies, which, conducted as they have been, and directed to the questions they discuss, tend to undermine all the principles of morality in the minds of those by whom they are frequented. Some time ago it will be recollected that persons publicly delivered lectures of the most seditious tendency, and when these were prohibited by the laws so properly introduced for the remedy of such abuses, they assumed the title of historical lectures, and, with little variation, were directed to the same objects as before. Discussions of this nature in the hands by which they were taken up, and with the audience to whom they were addressed, were employed to attack all religion, government, and society, and though in the outset they may not so directly lead to the consequences which it was the object of the conspirators of this country to attain, they ultimately tend to prepare the minds of men for those horrors and calamities, which are the infallible consequences of those principles against which it is our duty to provide. To prevent such dangerous abuses, it will be a part of the proposed measure to extend the provisions against seditious lectures and political discussions, to all places where money is taken at the door, making this the criterion, and putting them upon the footing of disorderly houses, unless where a

licence has been previously taken out, and where they are subject to the inspection of the magistrate. By this regulation I conceive no innocent pursuit or amusement will be obstructed, and the public will be protected from an evil, of a danger far beyond the importance of those from whom it proceeds.

The provisions which I shall have the honour to propose, will likewise be directed against another part of that plan, pursued with no less industry to poison the minds of the ignorant and unwary. It has been the proud and distinguishing principle of the law of England, that the liberty of the press has been cherished as the most invaluable bulwark of liberty. It certainly is one from which, when not abused, the greatest advantages might be derived, but when abused and perverted, it has led to the greatest mischiefs. It has, therefore, been the object of the law of this country, without imposing any previous restraint to secure a subsequent responsibility in the author and publisher, if they should be guilty of private libels or public treason. Those publications of a higher order, under the laws of the country, and the prevalent spirit of loyalty in the people, are tolerably sure of being subjected to punishment for their libels, at least those of a more flagrant nature. Happily those libels, formerly so prevalent, are, owing to these causes, more restrained. Unfortunately, however, we have seen the liberty of the press abused in a way most calculated to pervert and mislead the lower orders. Instead of being employed to communicate knowledge and instruction, it has been perverted to give false and imperfect representations of facts, and inadequate or improper discussions of subjects in nowise adapted to those to whom they were addressed, and fitted to produce the greatest mischief to those who are the immediate objects, and ultimately to the public itself. Hence has been prosecuted to such an extent the plan of disseminating handbills, tending to poison the minds of the people, to deprave their morals, to pervert their loyalty, and to undermine their religion. Against this species of mischief some new provisions are necessary, the object of which will be always to have responsible the author or publisher. This regulation is strictly in the spirit of

the constitution. If in its application it is new, it is because the evil is likewise new, while the remedy is so unexceptionable in its nature, that it must be approved by all who value public morals and public tranquillity.

A provision, the object of which is so legitimate, cannot be felt as a restraint by those who are engaged in the regular trade connected with the press. What is required, is to have the name of a publisher affixed to every hand-bill, as in every other species of publication. To prevent their being issued from private presses, it will be necessary to obtain some knowledge of those who may have such implements in their possession. To obtain this, it is proposed to have a register kept at those places where types are fabricated, (which are not very numerous) to discover who acquire them, to make those who now have presses register them, and make it necessary for every publication circulated to bear the name of the publisher affixed to it. This regulation, I am sure, will not injure the cause of science, literature and improvement, or even interfere with any innocent amusement, while it will secure the public against the circulation of anonymous treason, sedition, or impiety, by which, in the quarters most exposed, the pillars of morality, religion, and government are attacked.

Such is the third object of the measure which I shall propose. The report of the committee will remain for further consideration, and it will be for the house to consider whether the nature of the dangers to which we are exposed, demands any fresh precautions. The circumstances of the times require a vigilance always ready to accommodate our measures of security to the degree of malignity which danger may assume, and to vary their remedies with the changing character of the evil by which we are threatened. Fortunate shall we be if the wise, moderate, and salutary provisions already adopted or proposed, shall prove adequate to the inveteracy of the disease, the virulence of which neither detection nor punishment, nor a sense of the blessings we enjoy, nor of the horrible calamities with which the principles of jacobinism have desolated Europe, has been able to

abate. In spite of every discouragement and every obstacle, treason has pursued its purposes. Happily, this country has been shielded from the calamities of French principles and French treasons, by the well tempered vigour of its government, and the prevalent active loyalty of its people. Yet, against all this opposition conspiracy has struggled. Vigilance and energy are still requisite to secure the blessings so firmly maintained. Upon every occasion it has been the honourable character of parliament to have exerted a vigour limited to the necessity of the case. It has kept up to the urgency of the danger, and never overstepped the bounds of moderation. Preserving the liberties of the country sacred and unimpaired, it has displayed an energy proportioned to the magnitude of the crisis; and, guided by the same principles, I trust it will continue to pursue that course which has secured the constitution, the liberties, the prosperity, and the happiness of this country. I shall now move, Sir, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that a bill be brought in to renew and amend the bill passed in the thirty-eighth of his present Majesty, for securing and detaining persons accused of treason and sedition; and that a bill be brought in to suppress seditious societies and seditious practices."

The resolutions were passed without a division.

June 7, 1799.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, his Majesty's message, which had been referred to the committee the preceding day, acquainting the House with the engagements entered into between his Majesty and the Emperor of Russia, was read.

MR. PITT then rose, and in a short speech moved "that the sum of 825,000*l.* be granted to his Majesty, to enable his Majesty to fulfil his engagements with Russia in such a manner as may be best adapted to the exigencies of the case."

Mr. Tierney opposed the motion on the ground of its object being undefined. He called upon ministers to declare what was the *common cause*, they talked of, and what was meant by the *deliverance of Europe*; asserting, that he would not vote any sums for a purpose which he did not understand, and in aid of a power whose object he did not know, which might be appropriated

to her own views exclusively, and to the injury instead of the welfare of England.

MR. PITT.—I wish, Sir, to offer such an explanation on some of the topics dwelt upon by the honourable gentleman* who just sat down, as will, I think, satisfy the committee and the honourable gentleman. The nature of the engagement to which the message would pledge the house is simply, that, 1st, for the purpose of setting the Russian army in motion, we shall advance to that country 225,000*l.* part of which by instalments, to accompany the subsidy to be paid when the army is in actual service. And I believe no one, who has been the least attentive to the progress of affairs in the world, who can appreciate worth, and admire superior zeal and activity, will doubt the sincerity of the sovereign of Russia, or make a question of his integrity in any compact. The 2d head of distribution is 75,000*l.* per month, to be paid at the expiration of every succeeding month of service; and, lastly, a subsidy of 37,500*l.* to be paid after the war, on the conclusion of a peace by common consent. Now, I think it strange that the honourable gentleman should charge us with want of prudence, while it cannot be unknown to him that the principal subsidies are not to be paid until the service has been performed, and that in one remarkable instance the present subsidy differs from every other, in as much as a part of it is not to be paid until after the conclusion of a peace by common consent. I think gentlemen would act more consistently if they would openly give their opposition on the principle that they cannot support the war under any circumstances of the country and of Europe, than in this equivocal and cold manner to embarrass our deliberations, and throw obstacles in the way of all vigorous co-operation. There is no reason, no ground to fear that that magnanimous prince will act with infidelity in a cause in which he is so sincerely engaged, and which he knows to be the cause of all good government, of religion and humanity, against a monstrous medley of tyranny, injustice, vanity, irreligion, ignorance, and folly. Of such an ally there

* Mr. Tierney.

can be no reason to be jealous; and least of all have the honourable gentlemen opposite me grounds of jealousy, considering the nature and circumstances of our engagements with that monarch. As to the sum itself, I think no man can find fault with it. In fact, it is comparatively small. We take into our pay 45,000 of the troops of Russia, and I believe, if any gentleman will look to all former subsidies, the result will be, that never was so large a body of men subsidized for so small a sum. This fact cannot be considered without feeling that this magnanimous and powerful prince has undertaken to supply at a very trifling expense a most essential force, and that for *the deliverance of Europe*. I still must use this phrase, notwithstanding the sneers of the honourable gentleman. Does it not promise the deliverance of Europe, when we find the armies of our allies rapidly advancing in a career of victory at once the most brilliant and auspicious that perhaps ever signalized the exertions of any combination? Will it be regarded with apathy, that that wise and vigorous and exalted prince has already, by his promptness and decision, given a turn to the affairs of the continent? Is the house to be called upon to refuse succours to our ally, who, by his prowess, and the bravery of his arms, has attracted so much of the attention and admiration of Europe?

The honourable gentleman says he wishes for peace, and that he approved more of what I said on this subject towards the close of my speech, than of the opening. Now what I said was, that if by powerfully seconding the efforts of our allies, we could only look for peace with any prospect of realizing our hopes, whatever would enable us to do so promptly and effectually would be true economy. I must, indeed, be much misunderstood, if generally it was not perceived that I meant, that whether the period which is to carry us to peace be shorter or longer, what we have to look to is not so much when we make peace, as whether we shall derive from it complete and solid security; and that whatever other nations may do, whether they shall persevere in the contest, or untimely abandon it, we have to look to ourselves for the means of defence, we are to look to the

means to secure our constitution, preserve our character, and maintain our independence, in the virtue and perseverance of the people. There is a high-spirited pride, an elevated loyalty, a generous warmth of heart, a nobleness of spirit, a hearty, manly gaiety, which distinguish our nation, in which we are to look for the best pledges of general safety, and of that security against an aggressing usurpation, which other nations in their weakness or in their folly have yet no where found. With respect to that which appears so much to embarrass certain gentlemen—the deliverance of Europe—I will not say particularly what it is. Whether it is to be its deliverance from that under which it suffers, or that from which it is in danger; whether from the infection of false principles, the corroding cares of a period of distraction and dismay, or that dissolution of all governments, and that death of religion and social order which are to signalize the triumph of the French republic, if unfortunately for mankind she should, in spite of all opposition, prevail in the contest;—from whichever of these Europe is to be delivered, it will not be difficult to prove, that what she suffers, and what is her danger, are the power and existence of the French government. If any man says that the government is not a tyranny, he miserably mistakes the character of that body. It is an insupportable and odious tyranny, holding within its grasp the lives, the characters, and the fortunes of all who are forced to own its sway, and only holding these that it may at will measure out of each the portion, which from time to time it sacrifices to its avarice, its cruelty, and injustice. The French republic is dyked and fenced round with crime, and owes much of its present security to its being regarded with a horror which appals men in their approaches to its impious battlements.

The honourable gentleman says, that he does not know whether the Emperor of Russia understands what we mean by the deliverance of Europe. I do not think it proper here to dwell much at length on this curious doubt. But whatever may be the meaning which that august personage attaches to our phrase “the deliverance of Europe,” at least he has shewn that he

is no stranger to the condition of the world; that whatever be the specific object of the contest, he has learnt rightly to consider the character of the common enemy, and shews by his public proceedings that he is determined to take measures of more than ordinary precaution against the common disturbers of Europe, and the common enemy of man. Will the honourable gentleman continue in his state of doubt? Let him look to the conduct of that prince during what has passed of the present campaign. If in such conduct there be not unfolded some solicitude for the deliverance of Europe from the tyranny of France, I know not, Sir, in what we are to look for it. But the honourable gentleman seems to think no alliance can long be preserved against France. I do not deny that unfortunately some of the nations of Europe have shamefully crouched to that power, and receded from the common cause, at a moment when it was due to their own dignity, to what they owed to that civilized community of which they are still a part, to persevere in the struggle, to reanimate their legions with that spirit of just detestation and vengeance which such inhumanity and cruelty might so well provoke. I do not say that the powers of Europe have not acted improperly in many other instances; and Russia in her turn; for, during a period of infinite peril to this country, she saw our danger advance upon us, and four different treaties entered into of offensive alliance against us, without comment, and without a single expression of its disapprobation. This was the conduct of that power in former times. The conduct of his present Majesty raises quite other emotions, and excites altogether a different interest. His Majesty, since his accession, has unequivocally declared his attachment to Great Britain, and, abandoning those projects of ambition which formed the occupation of his predecessor, he chose rather to join in the cause of religion and order against France, than to pursue the plan marked out for him to humble and destroy a power, which he was taught to consider as his common enemy. He turned aside from all hostility against the Ottoman Porte, and united his force to the power of that prince, the more effectually to check the progress

of the common enemy. Will, then, gentlemen continue to regard with suspicion the conduct of that prince? Has he not sufficiently shewn his devotion to the cause in which we are engaged, by the kind, and number, and value of his sacrifices, ultimately to prevail in the struggle against a tyranny which, in changing our point of vision, we every where find accompanied in its desolating progress by degradation, misery, and nakedness, to the unhappy victims of its power—a tyranny which has magnified and strengthened its powers to do mischief, in the proportion that the legitimate and venerable fabrics of civilized and polished society have declined from the meridian of their glory, and lost the power of doing good—a tyranny which strides across the ill-fated domain of France, its foot armed with the scythe of oppression and indiscriminate proscription, that touches only to blight, and rests only to destroy; the reproach and the curse of the infatuated people who still continue to acknowledge it. When we consider that it is against this monster the Emperor of Russia has sent down his legions, shall we say that he is not entitled to our confidence?

But what is the constitutional state of the question? It is competent, undoubtedly, to any gentleman to make the character of an ally the subject of consideration; but in this case it is not to the Emperor of Russia we vote a subsidy, but to his Majesty. The question, therefore, is, whether his Majesty's government affix any undue object to the message, whether they draw any undue inference from the deliverance of Europe. The honourable gentleman has told us, that his deliverance of Europe is the driving of France within her ancient limits—that he is not indifferent to the restoration of the other states of Europe to independence, as connected with the independence of this country; but it is assumed by the honourable gentleman, that we are not content with wishing to drive France within her ancient limits, that, on the contrary, we seek to overthrow the government of France; and he would make us say, that we never will treat with it as a republic. Now I neither meant any thing like this, nor expressed myself so as to lead to such inferences. What-

ever I may in the abstract think of the kind of government called a republic, whatever may be its fitness to the nation where it prevails, there may be times when it would not be dangerous to exist in its vicinity. But while the spirit of France remains what at present it is, its government despotic, vindictive, unjust, with a temper untamed, a character unchanged, if its power to do wrong at all remains, there does not exist any security for this country or Europe. In my view of security, every object of ambition and aggrandizement is abandoned. Our simple object is security, just security, with a little mixture of indemnification. These are the legitimate objects of war at all times ; and when we have attained that end, we are in a condition to derive from peace its beneficent advantages ; but until then, our duty and our interest require that we should persevere unappalled in the struggle to which we were provoked. We shall not be satisfied with a false security. War, with all its evils, is better than a peace in which there is nothing to be seen but usurpation and injustice, dwelling with savage delight on the humble, prostrate condition of some timid suppliant people. It is not to be dissembled, that in the changes and chances to which the fortunes of individuals, as well as of states, are continually subject, we may have the misfortune, and great it would be, of seeing our allies decline the contest. I hope this will not happen. I hope it is not reserved for us to behold the mortifying spectacle of two mighty nations abandoning a contest, in which they have sacrificed so much, and made such brilliant progress.

In the application of this principle, I have no doubt but the honourable gentleman admits the security of the country to be the legitimate object of the contest ; and I must think I am sufficiently intelligible on this topic. But wishing to be fully understood, I answer the honourable gentleman when he asks, " Does the right honourable gentleman mean to prosecute the war until the French republic is overthrown ? Is it his determination not to treat with France while it continues a republic ? " — I answer, I do not confine my views to the territorial limits of France ; I contemplate the principles, character, and conduct

of France ; I consider what these are ; I see in them the issues of distraction, of infamy and ruin, to every state in her alliance ; and therefore I say, that until the aspect of that mighty mass of iniquity and folly is entirely changed ;—until the character of the government is totally reversed ;—until, by the common consent of the general voice of all men, I can with truth tell parliament, France is no longer terrible for her contempt of the rights of every other nation—she no longer avows schemes of universal empire—she has settled into a state whose government can maintain those relations in their integrity, in which alone civilized communities are to find their security, and from which they are to derive their distinction and their glory ;—until in the situation of France we have exhibited to us those features of a wise, a just, and a liberal policy, I cannot treat with her. The time to come to the discussion of a peace can only be the time when you can look with confidence to an honourable issue ; to such a peace as shall at once restore to Europe her settled and balanced constitution of general polity, and to every negotiating power in particular, that weight in the scale of general empire which has ever been found the best guarantee and pledge of local independence and general security. Such are my sentiments. I am not afraid to avow them. I commit them to the thinking part of mankind ; and if they have not been poisoned by the stream of French sophistry, and prejudiced by her falsehood, I am sure they will approve of the determination I have avowed, for those grave and mature reasons on which I found it. I earnestly pray that all the powers engaged in the contest may think as I do, and particularly the Emperor of Russia, which, indeed, I do not doubt ; and therefore I do contend, that with that power it is fit that the house should enter into the engagement recommended in his Majesty's message.

Mr. Tierney, in reply, commented on the last speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and contended that the explanation he had given made it clear, that it was not merely against the power of France we were struggling, but against her system ;—not merely to repel her within her ancient limits, but to drive her back from her present to her ancient opinions ;—in fact, to

prosecute the war until the existing government of France should be overthrown. Upon which grounds he should refuse voting any subsidy for foreign service.

MR. PITT rose once more :

Sir, I cannot agree to the interpretation the honourable gentleman has thought proper to give to parts of my speech. He has supposed that I said, we persevere in the war, and increase our activity, and extend our alliances, to impose a government on another country, and to restore monarchy to France. I never once uttered any such intention. What I said was, and the house must be in the recollection of it, that the France which now exists, affords no promise of security against aggression and injustice in peace, and is destitute of all justice and integrity in war. I observed also, and I think the honourable gentleman must agree with me when I repeat it, that the character and conduct of that government must enter into the calculation of security to other governments against wrong, and for the due and liberal observance of political engagements. The honourable gentleman says, that he has too much good sense, and that every man must have too much good sense, to suppose that territorial limits can, of themselves, be made to constitute the security of states. He does well to add his sanction to a doctrine that is as old as political society itself. In the civilized and regular community, states find their mutual security against wrong, not in territory only, they have the guarantee of fleets, of armies, of acknowledged integrity, and tried good faith; it is to be judged of by the character, the talents, and the virtues of the men who guide the councils of states, who are the advisers of princes: but what is it in the situation of the French republic, on which can be founded a confidence which is to be in itself some proof that she can afford security against wrong? She has territory, she has the remains of a navy, she has armies; but what is her character as a moral being? who is there to testify her integrity? The Swiss nation!—Who bears testimony to her good faith? The states she has plundered, under the delusive but captivating masks of deliverers from tyranny!—What is the

character of her advisers? what the aspect of her councils? They are the authors of all that misery, the fountain-head of all those calamities, which, marching by the side of an unblushing tyranny, have saddened and obscured the fairest and the gayest portions of Europe, which have deformed the face of nature wherever their pestiferous genius has acquired an ascendancy. In fine, we are to look for security from a government which is constantly making professions of different kinds of sentiments, and is constantly receding from every thing it professes;—a government that has professed, and in its general conduct still manifests, enmity to every institution and state in Europe, and particularly to this country, the best regulated in its government, the happiest in itself, of all the empires that form that great community.

Having said thus much on those matters, I shall now shortly notice a continued confusion in the honourable gentleman's ideas. On another occasion he could not understand what I meant by the deliverance of Europe; and in this second effort of his inquisitive mind he is not more happy. He tells us, he cannot see any thing in the present principles of France but mere abstract metaphysical dogmas. What are those principles which guided the arms of France in their unprincipled attack on the independence of Switzerland, which the honourable gentleman has reprobated? Was the degradation, without trial, of the members of the assemblies of France—were, in short, those excesses, and that wickedness, in the contemplation of which the honourable gentleman says he first learnt to regard France as an odious tyranny—will he class the principles which could lead to all these things with the mere metaphysical obstructions of heated, over-zealous theorists? He will still persist, at least he has given the promise of considerable resistance to all arguments to the contrary, in saying that we have an intention to wage war against opinion. It is not so. We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet, nor the speculations of the school. We are at war with armed opinions; we are at war with those opinions which the sword of audacious, unprincipled, and impious

innovation seeks to propagate amidst the ruins of empires, the demolition of the altars of all religion, the destruction of every venerable, and good, and liberal institution, under whatever form of polity they have been raised ; and this, in spite of the dissenting reason of men, in contempt of that lawful authority which, in the settled order, superior talents and superior virtues attain, crying out to them not to enter on holy ground, nor to pollute the stream of eternal justice ;—admonishing them of their danger, whilst, like the genius of evil, they mimic their voice, and, having succeeded in drawing upon them the ridicule of the vulgar, close their day of wickedness and savage triumph with the massacre and waste of whatever is amiable, learned, and pious, in the districts they have over-run. Whilst the principles avowed by France, and acted upon so wildly, held their legitimate place, confined to the circles of a few ingenious and learned men ;—whilst these men continued to occupy those heights which vulgar minds could not mount ;—whilst they contented themselves with abstract inquiries concerning the laws of matter or the progress of mind, it was pleasing to regard them with respect ; for, while the simplicity of the man of genius is preserved untouched, if we will not pay homage to his eccentricity, there is, at least, much in it to be admired. Whilst these principles were confined in that way, and had not yet bounded over the common sense and reason of mankind, we saw nothing in them to alarm, nothing to terrify ; but their appearance in arms changed their character. We will not leave the monster to prowl the world unopposed. He must cease to annoy the abode of peaceful men. If he retire into the cell, whether of solitude or repentance, thither we will not pursue him ; but we cannot leave him on the throne of power.

I shall now give some farther instances of the confusion of the honourable gentleman's ideas. He says, that the French republic and liberty cannot exist together : therefore, as a friend to liberty, he cannot be a friend to France. Yet he tells us almost in the same breath, that he will not vote for any thing that does not tend to secure the liberties of that country, though, to give

him the benefit of his own proposition, not to wish the overthrow of France is not to wish for the preservation of English liberty. Indeed, he says, he will vote nothing for the purpose of overthrowing that tyranny, or, as he very strangely adds, the rights and liberties of others—the rights and liberties of France! But how will the gentleman maintain his character for consistency, while he will not vote for any measure that seeks to overthrow the power of a government, in the contemplation of which he has discovered a gulph in his mind between the ideas of its existence and the existence of liberty? It never, however, entered his mind to say that he made the overthrow of the French republic the *sine quâ non*.

Here another example arises of that confusion of ideas into which, contrary to his usual custom, the honourable gentleman has fallen this evening:—he says he is one of those who think, that a republic in France is not contrary to the safety of other countries, and not incongruous to the state of France itself. How strange is this! whilst we have it from the honourable gentleman, that liberty and the French republic cannot exist together. I am ready to say, that if the republican regimen was characterized by the sobriety of reason, affording nourishment, strength, and health to the members of the community; if the government was just and unambitious, as wisdom and sound policy dictate; if order reigned in her senates, morals in the private walk of life, and in their public places there were to be found the temples of their God, supported in dignity, and resorted to with pious awe and strengthening veneration by the people, there would be in France the reality of a well-regulated state, under whatever denomination, but *obruit male partum, male retentum, male gestum imperium*. Whilst republican France continues what it is, then I make war against republican France; but if I should see any chance of the return of a government that did not threaten to endanger the existence of other governments, far be it from me to breathe hostility to it. I must first see this change of fortune to France and to Europe make its progress with rapid and certain steps, before I relax in the

assertion of those rights, which, dearer to Britons than all the world, because by them better understood and more fully enjoyed, are the common property, the links of union of the regular governments of Europe. I must regard as an enemy, and treat as such, a government which is founded on those principles of universal anarchy, and frightful injustice, which, sometimes awkwardly dissembled, and sometimes insolently avowed, but always destructive, distinguish it from every other government of Europe.

The motion passed without a division.

THE House afterwards resolved itself into a committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Bragge in the chair ;—when

MR. PITT addressed the committee as follows :

SIR,—As the discussion of the objects to which your attention is now directed, has on a former occasion occupied in a considerable degree the minds of gentlemen, it will not be necessary for me to dwell on them now at any great length. Some articles are new, but the principal are fresh in the recollection of gentlemen. It is, however, my duty to recapitulate the supplies, and to lay before the committee the ways and means to which I intend to have recourse to provide for the expenditure : and if I have before previously felt myself justified in asserting with confidence the flourishing state of our resources, it is at present not less a matter of consolation to us, than we before derived from the prosperous situation of affairs in general. I shall begin with recapitulating the different heads, under which the articles of supply are usually classed.

Gentlemen will recollect, in stating the article of service which first presents itself, and which I had to notice last December, under the head of the navy, that it amounted to 10,920,000*l*. The ordinaries in that branch of the public service were then calculated at 693,000*l*. the extraordinary at 729,000*l*. and the

transport service at 1,300,000*l.*; so that the estimate, with a small addition which afterwards took place, amounted to a sum total of 13,653,000*l.* for the year 1799. The only variation which I have now to make in this branch, is a statement which I am confident the committee will hear with considerable satisfaction. The estimate was formed before it could be judged with precision how far the calculation of 7*l.* per man per month would be sufficient to answer the object proposed. But it appears, on making up the accounts to the 31st of last December, that there has been a diminution and saving of no less importance than 903,000*l.* in that article. I have also to observe, that we have now the additional advantage of taking a view of the present year, when nearly six months of it have elapsed. The accounts are made out, and from the experience which we have already had, I am justified in stating prospectively, that a farther saving of 500,000*l.* may be expected in the course of the year. I am therefore to deduct these two sums of 903,000*l.* being a diminution of the navy debt, and of 500,000*l.* which is expected to be saved, and we shall have the total sum of the supply to answer every exigency of this important branch of national exertion at 12,250,000*l.* being less by 1,403,000*l.* than the estimate furnished in December. There may also arise circumstances to alter this statement; but the committee will see that I proceed on sure and cautious grounds.

The next article of supply which it is my duty to notice, is the army; and I have to remark, that no alteration is to be proposed with respect to the sums voted in December in the committee of supply, on the estimates then furnished, making a total amount of 8,840,000*l.* I also stated at that time a vote of credit for one million, and the extraordinaries for 1799, as not likely to exceed two millions. It affords me peculiar satisfaction to be able to inform the committee, that the estimate then made was well founded. But with a view to employ to advantage any offensive force, as opportunities may occur, I propose that the estimate of the army extraordinaries may

be increased to two millions and a half, which will give a total sum of 12,340,000*l.*

The estimate under the head of ordnance stood in December at 1,570,000*l.*; and there is no necessity to make any alteration in it at present.

The charge for miscellaneous services under the head of plantation estimates remains as it was stated in December, at 600,000*l.*

The interest due to the bank on exchequer bills and treasury bills amounted to 565,180*l.* but it is now 100,000*l.* less. I am also to notice the deficiency of ways and means, and shall state the specific items, in order to enable gentlemen to form a balance between the different statements. The discount on the prompt payment of the loan was stated at 211,000*l.* and that on exchequer bills, in 1798, at 300,000*l.* However, the general deficiency of ways and means may be taken at 500,000*l.* It will be observed that I take credit for the assessed taxes, the voluntary contributions, and the tax on imports and exports. The whole sum was estimated at seven millions and a half; but the produce was only seven millions, and there is consequently a deficiency of 500,000*l.* The product of the assessed taxes was nearly four millions, and the voluntary contributions, without including India, produced two millions. But it is impossible for us to pass over those generous exertions of public spirit, without feeling and expressing the deep and lasting sentiments of gratitude, to which they have so distinguished and honourable a claim. It is with the pride of patriotic exultation that we must ever recollect those exertions which were made in the moment of great and pressing difficulties, and when the weight of the assessed taxes operated against the liberality from which they sprung. It is also, Sir, a subject of infinite satisfaction to me to state to the committee, that no distance of place, however remote, that no circumstances, however embarrassing, have prevented Englishmen from assisting their country in the hour of danger. The army and the navy, alike impressed with a conviction of the justice

of the contest in which they fought, came forward and supported with their voluntary contributions, the happiness of the country which they had sealed with their blood. The gratuitous offerings of that part of the world to which men were supposed to have gone for the purpose of gratifying interested motives and selfish pursuits, vied in liberality with the rest of the empire; and I can undertake to say, that India does not fall short, in proportion to the wealth and means of that country, of the whole sum which the wisdom of the legislature thought fit to impose on the country. The voluntary contributions from India amount to the sum of 300,000*l*.

It is not now necessary to notice the imports and exports, but there has been an increase of 520,000*l*.

The next article, to which I did not allude in last December, but in which there is no deficiency in the general statement, is the unsatisfied services out of 1797. They were formerly deducted out of the growing produce of the consolidated fund, and I can now state them positively at 699,000*l*. There is also another new sum to make good for certain services unsatisfied of 303,000*l*. and some small articles on the charge of the commissioners for managing the national debt, amounting to 30,000*l*. In addition to the deficiencies of land and malt, estimated at 350,000*l*. there is a farther increase of 148,000*l*. making a total deficiency in that article of 498,000*l*. The subsidy to Russia is precisely fixed at 825,000*l*. and the annual addition of 200,000*l*. to the sinking fund for the discharge of the national debt. The vote of credit is proposed to the amount of three millions; but on account of the issue of the exchequer bills, I shall not add that sum to the supply.

Gentlemen will find, by recapitulating the different articles of supply, that they give the total sum of 30,947,352*l*. which is an increase by more than 1,600,000*l*. of that brought forward at Christmas, as the total of the supply was then stated at 29,272,000*l*. There may be omissions of some fractional sums, but the recapitulation will stand in the following manner:

Navy - - - - -	£ 13,653,000
Deduct diminution of the navy debt and saving expected in 1799 -	1,403,000
	£ 12,250,000
Army - - - - -	8,840,000
Vote of credit, 1798 - - - - -	1,000,000
Extraordinaries, 1799 - - - - -	2,500,000
Ordnance, exclusive of sea service - - - - -	1,570,000
Miscellaneous services - - - - -	3,264,351
Deficiency land and malt - - - - -	498,000
Subsidy to Russia - - - - -	825,000
National debt - - - - -	200,000
	30,947,351
Vote of credit for 1799 - - - - -	3,000,000

I now, Sir, come to state the articles of the ways and means, to which I intend to have recourse to meet this expenditure. The first objects that present themselves are the duties substituted for the land and malt, I mean the duties on sugar, tobacco, and malt, which produce the sum of 2,750,000*l*. The next is the surplus of the lottery, giving 200,000*l*.

Another article which follows is a subject of great and satisfactory difference to the committee in the consideration of the ways and means. Gentlemen will recollect I mentioned, last Christmas, that the growing produce of the consolidated fund was likely to be affected by many burdens and charges in arrear; and yet I now am happy to mention, that a considerable surplus is applicable to the supply. In one instance 699,000*l*. has been provided for by a vote. Two quarters have been paid, and two quarters of the six which it was supposed would remain, have actually passed. In looking at the actual produce, making good all charges, and computing the surplus of the consolidated fund up to the latest period, I am enabled to form a very different statement from what I formerly did. I took it last December, allowing for all considerations, at 1,500,000*l*.; and there is, at present, an actual surplus of 521,000*l*. in the quarters of January

and April. After paying all arrears, and including the advance of 800,000*l.* to Grenada, &c. and discharging the interest of the imperial loan, I am enabled to state the growing produce at 3,229,000*l.*; and this satisfactory circumstance arises from the extraordinary increase of the two last quarters: so that there is, in fact, an augmentation of 1,700,000*l.* beyond what I stated on conjecture last December.

The next article relates to the tax on imports and exports. The estimate which I formed amounted to 1,500,000*l.*; but, in consequence of different abandonments which were made, and some alterations which appeared obviously necessary, the product was taken at only 1,200,000*l.* The event has, however, turned out differently, and so very prosperously, as to justify the original statement of 1,500,000*l.*

The next article to which I come, I am concerned to observe, I cannot state with all the satisfaction which I wish I were warranted in expressing—I mean, Sir, the tenth upon income. Though I must admit that there have been grounds altogether sufficient to enable us to form a correct judgment on the ultimate produce of it, in many distant parts of the kingdom no returns of income have been hitherto made; and it must be observed, that no final decisions have passed the commissioners of appeal. But it is my duty to notice, that in one particular branch from which much was expected, the account of the returns appears likely to fall below my calculations. I allude to the commercial part of the community; and unless some farther examination should alter the operation of the tax, I have no reason to think it will produce more than one half of the four millions. But it must be observed, that my information on this point is not sufficiently correct, as returns have been made to the general commissioners, and no deduction has been yet made. I may, Sir, at all events, remark, that whatever may ultimately happen, I shall not be justified from the present circumstances in taking credit for more than seven millions and a half, as the product of this tax. Whatever we may take it at, it is necessary for me to say, that any defalcation cannot lead us to a conclusion that material alterations may not be made with respect to its operation, and

for the purpose of rendering it more beneficial to the exigencies of the public service. We ought, Sir, to consider it as far from being a discouraging circumstance, and by some means or other the policy of the country should not be defeated.

I have now to notice the amount of an instalment, or aid and contribution, in 1798; it was 700,000*l.*; but now taken, as it should be, at 650,000*l.* it will, when added to the seven millions and a half, give the sum of 8,150,000*l.* But as it is liable to pay the interest of the loan of 1798 for one half year of the sum of 8,000,000*l.* a deduction for that purpose must be made from it of 240,000*l.* and also a year's interest of 5*l.* 7*s.* per cent. on eleven millions, amounting to 588,000*l.*, which will leave the sum applicable to the supply at 7,300,000*l.* The first loan is for three millions, and the second for twelve; and these sums, with the others I have enumerated, will give a total sum of thirty-one millions, leaving a small surplus on the ways and means.

RECAPITULATION.

Sugar, tobacco, and malt	- - - - -	£. 2,750,000
Lottery	- - - - -	200,000
Surplus of consolidated fund in Jan. and April, 1799		521,000
Growing produce of ditto	- - - - -	3,229,000
Exports and imports	- - - - -	1,500,000
Ten per cent. on income	- - - - -	7,500,000
Instalments on aids and contributions,		
1798	- - - - -	650,000
		<u>8,150,000</u>
Deduct half year's interest on		
8,000,000 <i>l.</i> 1798	- - - - -	240,000
Ditto one year 11,000,000 <i>l.</i> ,		
at 5 <i>l.</i> 7 <i>s.</i> per cent	- - - - -	588,000
		<u>828,000</u>
Loan first	- - - - -	3,000,000
second*	- - - - -	12,000,000
		<u>15,000,000</u>
		<u>30,522,000</u>
Exchequer bills	3,000,000 <i>l.</i>	

* 3,000,000*l.* besides was borrowed for Ireland.

I must now, Sir, call the attention of the committee to the circumstance, that there is no provision made for the exchequer bills to the amount of 3,000,000*l.*, as I leave them ultimately to be funded, and expect they will be so on more advantageous terms. This is a consideration the more probable, from the punctuality with which the navy bills are paid, and the few exchequer bills which will remain in the market, as they will all be absorbed in the instalments of the loan. The arrangement appears to me, in every point of view, more economical and prudent, than in adding 3,000,000*l.* to the loan.

My next duty, Sir, is to state to the committee the terms upon which the loan has been made, and they afford to us and to the country grounds of peculiar satisfaction. The usual mode of receiving offers by fair and open competition has been adhered to. The proposal was made to the competitors of taking 125*l.* in the 3 per cent. consols, and 50 in the reduced, and it was accepted at the price of the day, considerably less than the actual value of 100*l.* I have the satisfaction to notice, that there was no contest at the low price of long annuities. Three of the most respectable houses in the country concluded with me on terms the most advantageous to the public, and I hope they will prove not less beneficial to themselves. They agreed to pay for 125*l.* in the 3 per cent. consols 69*l.* 4*s.* 4½*d.* and for the reduced 28*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, making 97*l.* 6*s.* 10½*d.* which, with the benefit of the discount at 2*l.* 6*s.* 6*d.*, gave 99*l.* 13*s.* 4½*d.* Gentlemen will observe, instead of *bonuses*, which had been the customary case, the present bargain has been concluded in a manner unexampled with respect to real advantage; and I think there can be no stronger ground to state, that the public opinion is in unison with my own, in considering the flourishing situation of our affairs. There is no cause for any gloomy view whatever, and our confidence in the national prosperity, spirit, and exertions, is, at least, equal to that entertained in the most distinguished and successful periods.

The next object to which I shall call the attention of the committee, will be the charges that are to defray the interest upon

part of this loan which remains unprovided for by any other fund. I have the satisfaction to state, that the amount of this sum is small; it is no more than 315,000*l*. The principle which I propose now to go upon, as the foundation of the whole system of finance, is the same which I offered to parliament last year, and which has been acted upon this year; it is, that there shall be no loan contracted for during any year, greater than what the amount of the sinking fund can pay off. By the operation of this fund the whole of the loan that is now to be raised to fifteen millions and a half, will be paid. The whole of the taxes which I mean to move for, will rest upon articles that arise entirely out of the present circumstances of affairs; and so far from operating as a tax, will rather be a relief to the public. This is to be done by withholding a certain proportion of the bounty, that has been allowed as a drawback upon sugars exported from this country.

I propose, that on clayed sugars from the British plantations, in addition to all other duties, a duty of 4*s*. per cwt. be laid, which, estimating the whole at 200,000 cwt. will produce 40,000*l*. On British plantation sugar exported, I shall also propose to withhold 2*s*. 6*d*. per cwt. of the drawback, in addition to 4*s*. now retained on 358 cwt.; on East India exported 76,000 cwt. at 6*s*. 6*d*. which will produce the sum of 62,000*l*. On foreign plantation sugar exported, at 2*s*. 6*d*. per cwt. will produce 14,000*l*. By taking 4*s*. per cwt. from the bounty now payable on refined sugar exported, there will arise a sum of 39,000*l*. And by withholding 4*s*. from coffee exported, a sum of 65,000*l*. will be produced.

One article of importation I have omitted, I mean British sugars left for home consumption, which at 8*d*. per cwt. I estimate will produce the sum of 56,000*l*.

There is another article upon which I propose to lay a duty, which will scarcely be felt by any description of persons in the country. In many parts of the kingdom, there is an extensive circulation of small notes. On every note under 40*s*. I shall propose to lay a tax of 2*d*.; and as the number supposed to be circulated throughout Great Britain is estimated at 1,500,000*l*.

this tax, according to that number, will produce 62,000*l.* But in a matter of so great uncertainty as this, I will suppose the amount to be considerably under that sum, and therefore state it at 42,000*l.*

RECAPITULATION.

750,000* notes annually, at 2 <i>d.</i> each, would be	
62,000 <i>l.</i> ; but in a matter of so much uncertainty,	
suppose only - - - - -	£. 42,000
British sugar left for home consumption, 1,700,000	
cwt. at 8 <i>d.</i> - - - - -	56,000
Clayed sugar from British plantations, in addition to	
all other duties, 200,000 cwt. (estimated) at 4 <i>s.</i>	
per cwt. - - - - -	40,000
British plantation sugar exported; withhold 2 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>	
per cwt. of the drawback, in addition to 4 <i>s.</i> now	
retained on 358 cwt.—East India sugars exported,	
76,000 cwt. at 6 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> - - - - -	62,000
Foreign plantation sugar exported, 2 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> per cwt.	
on 111,000 cwt. - - - - -	14,000
Refined sugar exported, 4 <i>s.</i> per cwt. of the bounty	
now payable, to be withheld on 196,000 cwt. -	39,000
Coffee exported in 1798, exclusive of Ireland,	
327,000 cwt. at 4 <i>s.</i> - - - - -	65,000
	£. 318,000

I am sure that the various circumstances of these statements must confirm in gentlemen's minds the inestimable advantages, that the public will derive from an adequate provision being made to answer the exigencies of each year. Gentlemen must see the

* It is supposed there are notes under 40*s.* circulating in the northern counties to the amount of 400,000*l.* chiefly of 20*s.* each. In Scotland it is difficult to form a probable conjecture of the number, but the amount can hardly be less than a million (perhaps twice as much.) Estimating the whole in Great Britain at 1,500,000*l.* and the notes to be issued once in two years is probably moderate.

great benefits that must result with regard to the future prosperity of the country. It must fill the mind of every man with satisfaction to contemplate so pleasing a prospect, that, should the war in which we are engaged be lengthened to ever so distant a period, we shall always have within our power the means of carrying it on with vigour, if our expenses shall not exceed the sums at which they are now estimated, and if we adhere to the system of borrowing no more than shall be answered by the taxes already existing. We have the satisfaction to observe, that although the tax on income is to be continued during that period, yet every year of war entails the continuance of that tax only for one year after the conclusion of a peace; and that there shall only be a charge of permanent taxes to the amount of 300,000*l.* additional on the country. Therefore, when we are about to calculate the burdens of the war, and compare them with the evils attending an insecure and dishonourable peace, let us ask ourselves this question: Shall we pay for another year a tax of ten per cent. on income? shall we, by that comparatively small sacrifice, save ourselves and our posterity from future burdens; or shall we by a want of energy and public spirit, increase our difficulties, and furnish our enemies with the only advantages they can have over us? Let us ask ourselves, what difficulty shall we have hereafter in bearing the burdens of a temporary loan each year of ten or eleven millions, for the payment of which a fund shall have already been provided?—loans which will not cause any accumulated interest, and which will produce no greater burden than a tax of 300,000*l.* in each year of war. To be able to ascertain the certainty of this proud situation, is a circumstance in itself invaluable. Every event that has taken place within a short period, and the universal expression of the public opinion, shews that we are rising in private wealth, and public prosperity and affluence. Every thing convinces us that we are in a situation in which we ought not to stop short of that adequate, full, and rational security which we have a right to expect. Every thing that now presents itself to our view must serve to do away the gloomy prognostics, which some persons, from a

spirit of opposition to government, and others from timidity and despondency, were in the habit of making. At the time when I offered to the house the plan for increasing the assessed taxes, there was no one measure that excited so great a clamour, and raised so many doubts in the minds of men, as to the probability of its endangering the permanent revenue, or striking at the root of the manufactures and commerce of the country. We, however, in spite of all this opposition, made the experiment of adopting a measure, the principle of which has, during the present session, been carried to a greater extent. We have the satisfaction to see that one plan was acted upon, and that the other has been accepted with the general consent and concurrence of all orders of men. This is attested not only by public opinion, but by the great degree of credit to which the country has risen: a circumstance which never happened to the same extent at the conclusion of any war in which this country has been engaged. The credit and prosperity of the country are not alone manifested by these general symptoms; they even appear in the different rounds of pleasure, amusements, and dissipation, with which many persons in the higher ranks of life are now in the habit of indulging themselves. There cannot be a stronger proof than this, that the people have not been distressed by means of the war; and that there is nothing gloomy in the finances of the country.

But how has the war affected the trade and revenue of the country? Our trade has never been in a more flourishing situation: the perpetual taxes of the present year exceed what they were last year, when they amounted to the sum of 14,574,000*l.*, a sum greater than ever was produced in the most flourishing times of peace. I need not now ask, whether the raising of the supplies within the year will be any detriment to the wealth of the country; the experiment that has already been tried, proves the contrary in the clearest and most incontestible manner. So far from that measure having caused any diminution in our trade, the imports of the last year are much greater than those of any former year: they amount to twenty-five millions, whereas those of the year 1797, amounted only to twenty-one

millions. A similar augmentation has taken place in our exports, both of home and foreign manufactures. The latter, in the year 1797, amounted to twenty-eight millions: the last accounts that have been made up, state their amount at 33,800,000*l*.

I should consider myself as wasting the time of the committee, were I to enter into any farther arguments to enforce this principle to the utmost; namely, that we should raise a sum within the year, which should be sufficient to answer the exigencies of each year. The great advantages arising from such a plan must be obvious to every body: it is that plan which of all others will be most likely to lead to a speedy conclusion of the contest in which we are engaged; it is that by which our enemies will be frustrated in the hopes they had entertained of ultimately ruining us, by the wished-for failure of our finances. Even if the spirit of the other countries of Europe should not prove to be equal to the fair promises that are now held out to us; if any of those powers that are now engaged in one common cause, should relax its exertions, or shrink from the alliance by a separate peace; or even if any advantages, on the part of the enemy, should unexpectedly arrest that career of victory and glory in which the allied armies are now advancing, and check the fond hopes which we all entertain of having our exertions speedily crowned with success; yet, even under such circumstances this country will stand on a high and secure ground, and I am happy to feel that the statements I have made must convince you that we ought not to relinquish the contest for an hour, until it can be terminated in a manner that shall be consistent with the safety and honour of the country.

The system that has been pursued in this country, with respect to finances, has frequently varied. In all the wars previous to the present, during this century, the mode of raising money has been that of borrowing, and leaving to posterity the burden of paying principal and interest. The successful institution of the sinking fund has made a most material alteration in this system. The consequence of this institution will be, that whatever may be the expense of any war, each year will carry along with it the extinction of a certain portion of the debt that may be contracted; and in case of the continuance of some years of

peace, the whole of the national debt would, after the expiration of a certain time, be liquidated by the accumulating operation of this fund; so that our debt may rather be considered as an annuity for a limited number of years. But this is not all: enough would not be done by the sinking fund; the plan which has been successfully adopted of raising the supplies within the year, whether we look upon it as the means of speedily terminating the contest, or as the sure means of enabling us to persevere in it successfully to any length of time, will tend to relieve us from all the lasting burdens which a great accumulation of debt would throw upon the country at a future period. It is only necessary for us to bear a pressure for a short time; and I have no hesitation in saying that we have ample means to meet this pressure, and the additional burdens which we shall thus wisely impose upon ourselves. Supposing the consolidated fund to go on as it has done for some years past, and that there should be no extraordinary rise in the price of stocks, it will in the year 1808 arrive at its maximum. The period from the present to that time will be an interval of great stress upon the country; but it will not be difficult to provide taxes for these eight years. If we look to the certainty of not being baffled in that, on which the enemy found their most sanguine hopes, and place their chief reliance while they meditate our destruction, we shall have the satisfaction of seeing that those resources which our enemies have been obliged to procure through the medium of robbery, rapine, confiscation and murder, are furnished to us by honest industry, and by the free conduct of a generous and loyal people; and that in such abundance, as is sufficient to gratify every view of ambition which we may entertain. Here Mr. Pitt entered at considerable length into a detail of calculations, which went to shew, that the whole of the national debt might be extinguished in the space of thirty-three years of peace; that supposing the war to continue ever so long, it could be carried on without the creation of a new debt; and that in case the war should soon be terminated, and that an interval of ten years should happen between the conclusion of one and the commencement of another war, in that period of peace the sinking fund would discharge seventy millions of debt, and enable the

country to enter into another war with superior energy, and superior means.

I have now stated to the committee the whole of the ways and means, and supply, for the ensuing year. I have shewn that, notwithstanding the length of time we have been engaged in this important struggle, yet our vigour has increased in proportion to the multiplied difficulties we had to encounter; and our resources have become more abundant by the growing prosperity of the country. I have pointed out to the committee the most effectual means of relieving us from those burdens which have hitherto grown along with the accumulation of debt; and if I have put it in your power to bequeath to your posterity any one system of finance more fair and perfect than another, I owe it to the spirit and greatness of the English nation, I owe it to the happy constitution with which she is blest (happier, indeed, than that of any other country in the world): and it is to all these, as well as to the genius and character of the people, that you are to consider yourselves indebted for that prosperous, powerful, and formidable situation in which you now stand.

Mr. Pitt then moved certain resolutions pursuant to his statements, which were severally agreed to.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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